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CHAPTERS
OF
COLLEGE ROMANCE.

BY
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First Series.



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CHAPTERS OF COLLEGE ROMANCE

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

"CHAPTERS of College Romance!" Do not, reader, be startled at the words. I am about to present to you some few recollections of scenes which have passed within the walls of that grey old building that looks so gravely and soberly over the leading thoroughfare of the metropolis of Ireland. From some of these scenes I will offer you the romance of truth—that truth which is often stranger than fiction. Do not imagine that within these sombre and dusty walls—within these courts dedicated to learning, there is no place for "romance." That word means something else than tales of lady-love and chivalry.

There is romance wherever there is a deviation from the modes of acting or of thought that are common among men ; there is romance wherever there is a disinterested act ;, wherever there is a high and ardent spirit to break through, by one eccentric effusion of its native generosity, the dull monotony of the selfishness of ordinary life. There is romance wherever interest is sacrificed to feeling—wherever there is love or friendship. Then, why should there not be romance in College? Are there not within its walls young hearts over whom the world has not yet thrown its deadening spell, to wither up all their feelings into the sear insensibility of what the world calls prudence? Are there not there young Irishmen to whom their nativity has attached the epithet of wild, and who certainly possess the birthright of being enthusiastic. There is, then, romance in college, and these pages will present you with much that is sad, and much that is gay, chequered just like the world in which we live, with all the strange mixtures of mirth and misery, with the alternate lights and shadows of gladness and sorrow.

When I say that these pages will be the romance of truth, I mean that *they are true*. It has so happened that I was much, very much longer an inmate of Alma Mater than falls to the average lot of her sons ; and, since I have ceased to sojourn within her chambers, accident, or perhaps I should say inclination, has thrown me very much into the society of college men. Many strange incidents have thus come to my knowledge ; some of them relating to events in which I took a share, others to those that had happened long before my day, and some few that have taken place since. It has often occurred to me that these incidents, if collected together, would form a curious and interesting commentary on the wayward follies and the vain ambition of youth ; and for years I employed my leisure hours in collecting materials for such a commentary. On the appearance of a Magazine bearing the name of the "University," it immediately suggested itself to me, that its pages would be the fittest medium for presenting the result of my memoranda to the public. Upon a reperusal I found that some of these memoranda it would not, perhaps, be ad-

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visible to publish ; however, quite enough of materials remained behind to form an interesting, and, I hope, not altogether an unprofitable work. I am very sure that if I succeed in simply bringing before the reader's eyes the life and the death of many whom I myself remember gay and light-hearted, and "following the ways of their own heart, while their heart cheered them in the days of their youth," I shall have done something towards impressing on his mind the lesson "remember thy Creator!"

My reader must not, however, understand me as saying that sadness and gaiety can mingle in anything like equal proportions in the memories I have to record. In glancing over the titles of my memoranda, I can select but few that do not tell of disappointed hopes, of wasted energies, of lost ambitions, of bright visions of the future clouded by guilt or marred by folly, or closed in the darkness of an early grave. Yet, most assuredly, these are not the average, or anything like the average, incidents of College life. Most of the remembrances of these early days are full of life, and happiness, and joy. But my readers must recollect that the course of the prosperous

man is a tame one. But little can be said of the student who, without any struggle, made his even way to the honours and emoluments of the world. In College, as elsewhere, the poetry of life is to be found in the histories of trials, of sorrows, of adversities, and even of crime. Few stories that recorded none of these, could rise above the common-place dullness of ordinary life.

Yet, even in the retrospect of what once was bright, how much of melancholy mingles. Time has been called the great consoler; but surely if he tempers, as he passes on, the anguish of recent sorrow, he is spreading its sadness over all the memories of the past. The most cheerful remembrances of by-gone days come tinged with sorrow to our heart. Standing near the base of the mountain our eye rests upon the pictures of life, and gladness upon its side; the warm cottage glistens in its sheltered nook, the white rill tumbles in its silvery joyousness from crag to crag. Look on the same scene from afar off, all these and a thousand other joyous images are gone—they have disappeared, or faded into specks upon the outline of the dim, and distant, and melancholy blue. So it is with the memo-

ries of our youth—we look back on the sunniest and brightest, through the melancholy haze of intervening years.

There are those to whom the very title of these chapters will recall associations, and bring back memories under the influence of which they will receive the writer who reminds them of their College days as a friend. Many a heart reverts in after-life, with some indescribable affection, to that gray old pile of buildings, within the walls of which so many of the hours of its youth were passed. Many a man amid the busy employments, the distracting cares, or the maddening ambitions of the world, recalls with mingled pleasure and regret the scenes, the companions, and the occupations of those priceless hours. There are few who have been educated within those walls to whom everything that comes with the name of College does not bear a charmed sound. However imperfect may be my "Chapters," there are those to whom they will be welcome for the sake of the name they bear, and the associations they recall. That they will be worthy of that name or of those recollections I cannot presume to assert. I can only

say that they are the reminiscences of one who has had a larger opportunity than most men of noting down strange incidents that have chequered the realities of College life.

But even those who cannot recur to a time when they were inmates of the chambers in which most of my scenes must be laid, may yet feel an interest in the description of the feelings and the passions that have agitated and torn young hearts within their walls. I cannot forget that in this latter class are included all of the gentler sex, those whose judgment on tales like these is always the most just and true. Without further preface, therefore, I ask of my reader—whether he has had in his youth the happiness of being a College man or not—I ask of my reader of that gentler sex to which, at least in our British Universities, College life is forbidden—to turn over to the next page, where will be found the first of the chapters into which the memoranda of my note-book are to be woven, and to judge for himself or herself whether I have anything to say which it is worth while to tell.

Until we meet on the other side of the page, farewell !

CHAPTER I.

THE BILLIARD TABLE.

IF there be among the young, whose light and careless eye may glance over these pages, or whose attention is arrested by the words with which I have headed this chapter; if there be one to whom The Billiard Table comes as a familiar sound—one who is just yielding to the seductive fascinations of gambling, without knowing the vortex into which he is insensibly drawn; if he is beginning to devote his evenings, perhaps his mornings, to what he may call a quiet game at billiards; if he has ventured occasionally upon a small bet—and if, in the excitement of loss, or the exultation of success, he has been tempted to hazard a larger stake, and has felt a deeper interest in the issue—let

him pause—let him no longer excuse himself with the plea that he is moderate in his play. Every gambler has thus begun, and many a gambler has commenced his career of ruin by a quiet game at billiards. If, reader, you be still hovering on the verge of destruction—if you have already begun to frequent the billiard-room, believe me that you are in danger. The sad experience of many will testify that the billiard-rooms that infest every city, are but, as it were, so many entrances to the hell of infamy to which they lead—so many porches built around the dark temple in which the foul fiend of gambling, in all its terrible potency, is enshrined. Were the doors of that temple thrown open, none would enter ; but there is a porch prepared, into which the unwary may be drawn, and they learn to linger there awhile ; while they are, as it were, prepared for the more terrible scenes that are enacted within. But, alas ! the transition is too easy ; a door opens from each porch, by which, after a little period of initiation, the victims are admitted to the foul rites of the inner shrine. Some may escape ; but how many never turn back, until they come

with shattered fortunes and ruined souls. It may be that in the porch you may see but little indication of your neighbourhood to ruin ; but still there is a door that leads straight from the spot where you stand to destruction. Every billiard-room is such a porch : the very atmosphere you breathe is tainted ; the passage to the darkest, to the foulest, the most dishonourable mysteries of gambling is close behind you ; the priests of the temple lurk around to drag you down that passage, from which you never will return ; sharpers are watching your unguarded moments ; " Arise and depart—this is no place for you ; it will destroy you, even with a sore destruction."

Do not imagine that I am preparing a tale to inculcate a moral. No : I am but relating that which happened. You will perceive, as I proceed, that I am presenting you with a narrative of events, many of which do not add to the force of the lesson I desire to convey. I confess, the moral I wish to be drawn from what I write is, the danger of venturing at all upon gambling : it is playing with poison—it is like amusing one's self by running into a poisoned

atmosphere. This is the lesson I wish my narrative to convey ; but I feel that, by colouring the facts which I relate, by suppressing something of the truth, I might make that lesson stand out in more bold and terrible distinctness. But the business I have proposed to myself is simply to relate facts ; and God knows that, even as they did occur, there is enough to appal the stoutest heart from the accursed fascinations of the gambling-table.

Edmund Connor was the only child of a gentleman who had amassed a considerable property in mercantile transactions. At the age of eighteen Edmund entered the University. Shortly after this, his father's death left him heir to about twelve hundred a year. By the somewhat curious conditions of his father's will, his guardians were to allow him three hundred a year until the period of his graduation, when he was to come into the full possession of his inheritance ; the balance in the interim was one half to go to a distant relation, and the other half to be paid into the funds of a charitable institution, in the vicinity of Dublin.*

* I do not know whether this may suggest a clue by

I had been acquainted with Mr. Connor some time before his death. I was senior by a few years in standing to Edmund; and I believe that he originally attached himself to me from a feeling which I have observed to be very prevalent among those who have just entered college—a desire to be much in the society of those whose seniority gives them an academic rank superior to their own.

In the eyes of a gib (I believe my academic readers will still understand the term) a sophister is quite a respectable being, and he naturally desires to be his associate. It is but a modification of the same feeling that prompts the country gentleman to be a parasite at the table of the duke, and the duke to be a loiterer in the court of a king.

For about two years after Edmund's entrance all went on smoothly. He was a young man of good, although not extraordinary talent; and

which the real name of the subject of this story may be detected. There is one of the trustees of this institution, who will, I am sure, recollect the circumstance of the receipt of £150 for five years. But HE is already acquainted with all the particulars.

he pursued his academic course with some honour. It was at the end of this time that I began to know him better. I found in him very many qualities to love. It is strange that it was just about the same time that his own folly chequered his path in life with the events that may, perhaps, serve to make his history a lesson.

He and I were both in the habit of visiting at the house of a family of the name of Jephson. The Jephsons were not very distant relations of my own. My intimacy with Edmund created, perhaps, an additional intimacy between my friend and my relations. I did not mean to put the words in the antithesis in which I have placed them, but let it be ; friend and relation are very, very different words ; "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." The Jephsons were, however, relatives, whom I never could look upon as friends ; they were, in every sense, people of the world. They occasionally gave fine entertainments, as often as a good, although not a splendid, fortune would admit ; they drove a handsome carriage, and subscribed to all the charity balls that were got up under fashionable

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patronage. Hence, they had the character of being a peculiarly amiable family, and their acquaintance was eagerly sought after, even in the circles which the frequenters of them, with the tacit consent of the rest of the world, call the best.

My aunt—for so she insisted on my calling her, although I did not stand in quite so near a relationship as that of her nephew—my aunt was a busy, active, and somewhat pompous woman : with very little intellect, she really was what is called an excellent manager. I had the good fortune to obtain some premiums in my division, and I had made one or two foolish speeches in the Historical Society, of which a favourable account had been carried to the Jephsons. This made me a prime favourite with the whole family. Mrs. Jephson immediately set me down as a Fellow of College and Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and took every opportunity of commending those great abilities which she fancied I must possess. Years have now gone by, and I am neither a Fellow nor Lord Chancellor, but an obscure and humble individual, whose existence is of consequence to no

one but myself, and even of little to myself. The vanity of youth has found its corrective in the sad experience of life ; and now I may confess that this flattery, although, sometimes, I was too sensible of its ridiculousness not to be annoyed, yet was pleasing. I am, however, speaking of a time previous to that at which my narrative properly commences. I was beginning to outgrow my vanity at the period when Edmund Connor became intimate with the Jephsons. It was when I first entered College, when I fancied that a January premium necessarily stamped its possessor as a man of genius, that I listened with pleasure to my aunt's panegyrics upon my talents. With a strange inconsistency, the opinion of myself was the only one of her opinions on which I set any value ; and I really imagined that when I was sent to walk with my cousins, as was not unfrequently the case, they had imbibed so much of their mother's spirit as to feel proud of walking with so distinguished an individual.

This, perhaps, was but the natural vanity of a young man. It soon passed away ; and I learned to contemplate my relatives in their true

characters, without being dazzled by their flattery. I believe that there is nothing so likely to conciliate your good opinion of others as to find that they either entertain, or profess to entertain, exaggerated notions of yourself. "A gift," says Solomon, "perverteth the wise;" and what gift so pleasing to the vanity of the human heart as that one which, after all, costs least to offer—flattery! You cannot judge impartially of those who have judged favourably of you. The smoke of the incense which they offer you rises up between you and them; and you see them through the coloured medium of that cloud, with all their good qualities magnified, and all their imperfections dimmed.

There was one trait in Mrs. Jephson's character which it required no great penetration to discover. She had an overweening and ill-concealed desire to 'make for her daughters what she called good matches—that is, matches with men who might have plenty of money and keep up a fashionable appearance. To effect this desirable object, she spared no pains; and indeed she had admirably trained the young ladies themselves to assist her in her intrigues. Many

a "net had been spread" for some rich old or young "bird" by Caroline, the eldest daughter, but hitherto "it had been spread in vain." I remember one occasion upon which she had thought herself quite sure of a very eligible prize—a half-pay captain of dragoons, with a large fortune and one eye. He had been her partner two or three times at balls; he had then become a constant visitor at the house. My aunt, having made all due inquiries as to his fortune and connexions, had directed poor Caroline to encourage him; and, like an obedient daughter, she obeyed. She played for him—she showed him her drawings—the Captain professed the most unqualified admiration of her accomplishments. Mamma contrived to leave the lovers alone together. The Captain looked very awkward and sighed—Caroline was quite sure he was just going to take her hand in his, and was preparing her cheek to blush, according to the most approved fashion—when one of her brothers most unseasonably entered the room. Alas! alas! for male constancy and female hopes! Three days after this interesting interview was thus unfortunately interrupted, the

news was brought to poor Caroline that the Captain had gone off with his own cook. I confess I was wicked enough to enjoy the confusion this intelligence created in the camp, where, I fear, my readers will suspect me of acting as a spy. Caroline went into a species of hysterics, and abused the Captain as a vile man. My aunt, however, who did not wish for her daughter the dangerous reputation of having been jilted, took a much wiser course. She immediately issued cards for a large party, at which Caroline appeared particularly gay; and it was whispered, *in confidence*, to two or three of the most talkative old dowagers of her acquaintance, that "poor Captain S—— was very much to be pitied: he had proposed for Caroline, who had indignantly refused him; and, driven to madness by her cruelty, he had made the rash step which had been the cause of so much conversation. Perhaps," added my aunt, as she lowered her voice to a confidential whisper, to an old lady to whom she told the story, "perhaps, to tell the truth, Caroline was to blame. She too much encouraged his attentions at first; but then, you know, girls will do

these things." My aunt certainly did not place her daughter in the most amiable light, and I thought her very silly: but I was mistaken; for a speculation in the matrimonial market, a young lady would be less injured by the fame of having jilted ten lovers than the disgrace of having been jilted by one. My aunt also made it a particular request of me that I would endeavour, without appearing to do so, to explain the matter wherever I could.

Time, however, passed on, and years grew upon Caroline, and she was just verging on that period of life at which young ladies can first realize to themselves the disagreeable possibility of their becoming old maids. Her mother's anxieties were, of course, redoubled, even though they were divided with her sister Letitia, who was now of an age to occupy a portion of her mother's matrimonial diligence. It is time for me, perhaps, to introduce those two young ladies to my readers. Caroline, the eldest, was not handsome. She had, however, a fashionable appearance and a good figure. She had the reputation of possessing some wit, although I confess I could never find it out. She was very

much admired as a performer upon the piano-forte; and her singing certainly was very correct, as far as the notes were concerned. I could never admire her singing or playing; because, although she appeared to throw a great deal of feeling into her voice, it generally happened that she was most pathetic when the words least required it. However, good judges admired her performance very much; and not having any great beauty to boast of, she was generally known as the amiable and accomplished Miss Jephson.

Letitia, who was some six or seven years younger than her sister, was really a pretty, and, if she had been well brought up, she would have been a nice girl. She had delicate features, pale complexion, and golden ringlets hanging down about her face. Poor thing! she had naturally some feeling; but her mother and sister used to laugh at every instance of its exhibition, and so she became as cold-hearted and fashionable as her sister. Caroline did her best to keep her in the background; and, although she had no pretensions to her beauty, and very little to her sense, the elder sister

generally contrived, by the dashingness of her manner, to engross the attention of the company. Mrs. Jephson was not much displeased at this, as she, of course, was most anxious to get Caroline off her hands. Such was the state of things when Edmund Connor began to be intimate at the house. Caroline was busily engaged in laying siege to the heart of a half-madman, half-fool, who fancied himself an enthusiastic admirer of her musical powers; Letitia was occupied most of the day in practising on the harp, for which, naturally, she had not the slightest taste, but to which she was condemned for eight hours a-day. The time of her confinement had been originally twelve; but the poor girl got a pain in her chest, and the medical man who was consulted, having recommended air and exercise, her mother reluctantly consented to cut down the practising to eight. Indeed, she did not even consent to this reduction until she ascertained that such constant application would injure her complexion, beyond the power of cosmetic washes to restore.

Edmund Connor had much of enthusiasm in

his disposition, perhaps more than was consistent with steadiness of conduct, certainly more than was consistent with the possession of prudence. He had mixed little, very little, in the world ; and there was about Letitia Jephson an affectation of fashionable refinement, that exterior deportment which some call polish, which always has its fascinations for the inexperienced. He had not known her long before I perceived that he regarded her with peculiar feelings. His eyes followed her through the crowded drawing-room. If she played, he was always standing behind her, sometimes venturing to turn over the pages of the music, but oftener gazing at her without either uttering a word or moving. He sometimes contrived to sit next her ; but in her presence he hardly ventured on a word of conversation ; and yet he would still sit by her, and appear happy in her neighbourhood, while he yet absolutely appeared to want courage to talk to her.

I watched him closely. I had even then formed a habit in which I found amusement—that of studying human nature in every modification of circumstance or character under which

I might have an opportunity of observing it. It is a habit of which I have never divested myself; but alas! it is one in pursuing which I have found more pain than amusement. I was then, however, a novice, and, like all novices, an enthusiast in the occupation. But I feel that I am too fond of talking of myself. I wished, however, to account for the accuracy of my observations. The fact was, I made them as a matter of curiosity. My study was human nature, and I lost no opportunity, that might assist my investigations.

There was, however, another who watched the indications of Edmund's incipient passion with no less attention, and perhaps more interest than I did—one whose speculations upon its progress were not so purely theoretical. My readers may mean me to understand either the young lady herself or her mother: in either case, they will not be astray. The former was, perhaps, the first to perceive that she had made a "conquest"—the latter was not slow in deciding that it might lead to an eligible settlement. Edmund had a good property; he had then a good character. His reputation for talent was

very far beyond what he deserved: he had money to spend, and in college he found many to speak well of him. Mrs. Jephson at once concluded, that with his independent fortune and fair prospects at the bar, for which he was preparing, he would be a desirable match for Letitia, and she promptly determined that no remissness on her part should stand in the way of her daughter's interest. Edmund was accordingly invited frequently to the house, and Miss Letitia put in practice all those little arts which are often, in similar instances, successful, but which, perhaps, in the present were unnecessary. Edmund, I believe, loved her with an ardent and enthusiastic admiration. I know that the casuists of love have said that it is easier for a woman to win a lover than to retain him; but I, in my simplicity, as I watched Letitia's complicated movements, could not help thinking that it was an unnecessary display of coquetry to employ artifice towards one who had already yielded to her the spontaneous homage of a generous and confiding heart.

But I am not about to present my readers with the details of a fashionable flirtation; and

yet in calling it so, I am doing one of the parties injustice. Edmund Connor loved, loved deeply ; but then, at least, his love was not returned. It was a strange thing to see him thus squandering all the young affections of his heart upon one who thought of them but as they affected her interest. It was strange to see the deep devotion of his soul contrasted with the cold and calculating selfishness of her who valued him not for what he was, but for what he possessed ; it was a picture that had the lights and shadows of the human heart ; it was just the development of the two great principles that set all life in motion, and actuate the generous or the prudent deeds of man. There was selfishness and feeling—romance and prudence. But we must soon turn another page in Edmund's history, and we will find the next a darker one.

"Give me neither poverty nor riches," is an obsolete, but yet, perhaps, a wise prayer. I am not sure that fortune is an advantage to a young man. In some of these chapters I must be called on to paint the ills of poverty, to describe a noble spirit crushed by the influence of want—a mighty heart made sick by that hope that is

long deferred—a proud mind smitten to the earth, and sinking exhausted by its struggles with the cruellest of all antagonists, want ; and now I am speaking of one who was nursed in the lap of prosperity, and one to whom fortune had been kind ; and yet it would seem as if, to the young man, her smiles were as fatal as her frowns. If the young man whose companion is poverty, must bear with the contempt of a heartless world, must endure that which David felt long ago, when he said that “ his soul was exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease ”—ah ! there are trials of another kind around the paths of the rich—the flatterer to lead astray—the seductions of pleasure to entice—the sharper to entrap.

Edmund became intimate, I know not how, with a young man of the name of Wilson. Wilson was a man who, without a patrimony, or any visible means of support, contrived to spend money as if he were a man of fortune. He was unquestionably a man of some talent, and in manner and address a perfect gentleman. As a companion he was almost fascinating : there was a brilliancy about his conversation that

made the time pass quickly in his society ; and if you could forget that which was but too manifest—that he was straining after display, and anxious to show off his own superiority, real or fancied—you could not have a more agreeable companion of an idle hour ; but he was nothing more. With a vast deal of pretension, both to information and originality, he knew little, and he had thought still less. His information was all superficial, and his most pointed observations flippant ; and though an assurance of manner gained him, with all who knew him but little, the reputation of talent, as did an affectation of sentimentality, that of a man of feeling—the more you knew of him, the more you discovered the shallowness of his intellect and the hollowness of his heart. He prided, or affected to pride himself very much on the punctiliousness of honour—that monstrous anomaly, a gambler's honour ! for Wilson was a gambler ; and unless report erred very far, it was the gaming table that supplied him with those sums which he spent, without having any legitimate means of procuring them. Indeed his constant attendance at the billiard tables, where he was always seen

playing for large bets, was, even without the hints that rumour spread of darker doings, sufficient to justify the surmise, that he nearly, if not altogether, depended upon this comfortable and reputable source for his support.

With this man Edmund contracted an intimacy, and his new friend was not slow in introducing him to the employments which formed the chief occupation of his own time. He became his instructor in billiard playing, and Edmund made a progress that shewed him an apt pupil. When he saw me, he was always full of accounts of his rapidly improving skill at the game which he described, and I believe justly described, as most fascinating. "He liked it," he said, "because it was not a game of chance, and it combined exercise with amusement. The principles of the game, too, were strictly scientific; the rules that determined the impulse and rebound of the balls, were all matters of mathematical investigation."

I told him that I knew all that, but that he might find them all in his books with less trouble and more precision: at the time, I suspected

that his devotion to the study was rather that of a gambler than a mathematician.

I do not know whether I should relate here a circumstance which occurred to myself. It is, perhaps, scarcely worth repeating; and yet, trifling as was the occurrence, it was one upon which I often have reflected with gratitude to Providence. Our destiny often turns upon little things; and I cannot help thinking that the circumstance which I am about to relate may have been the means of saving me from a fate as dark as any that in these pages I may describe. Persuaded by Edmund's solicitations, I consented to accompany him to the billiard table one evening, and to learn to play. I remember well the feelings with which I went. I had been brought up with a horror of billiard playing. An uncle of mine had devoted all his time to it—had become the best billiard player in Europe—and had died a beggar. I believe my poor father would rather have seen his son a chimney-sweep or a ratcatcher, than a billiard player. It was no wonder if I inherited or imbibed something of his aversion. I was very unwilling to comply with Edmund's request: he laughed at me; he

said that everything in excess was vicious ; but I “ would not refuse to take a glass of wine after dinner, because my great grandfather had died in a fit of drunkenness. It might have been very natural in my father to have disliked billiard-playing ; but it was mere superstition in me to suppose that I must be heir to all his aversions ”—my poor father had not left me much else to be heir to. I suffered myself to be overcome by his argument, although, indeed, I was not convinced by his reasonings. I accompanied him to a billiard-room which he had told me had been just set up by a very honest man, and which he and Wilson had determined to patronise, because it was quiet, and frequented by but few.

It was about an hour after nightfall, of a lovely moonlight night in April, that we went out together. I say I remember well my feelings : the soft haze of the moonlight was shed upon the streets as we went along ; and I knew not why, I fancied that its peacefulness, as it seemed to slumber upon the flags and the houses, was a reproach to me. I could not divest myself of the persuasion that I was doing

wrong—a persuasion which, perhaps, was altogether disproportioned to the reality—at least the apparent reality of the occasion. But who can calculate the strange and unbidden emotions of the human heart? Who will dare to say, that in the deep workings of the human spirit, starting as it does into mysterious emotions where nothing seems to call them forth, there may not be a something that communes with remote events, and unseen contingencies, of which there is no other indication than the mental disturbance that they mysteriously excite? We struck off —— Street, and went a short way down a narrow alley, which led us into a small square or court. The court was so small that the high houses altogether hid the moonlight; and the upper stories of the houses on the side fronting the moon, throwing back her beams in a thousand lustrous and diamond-like reflections from the panes of glass in the windows, formed a strange contrast with the deep shadow in which the rest of the court was wrapped. On the dark side of the court there was a door standing open: over it a candle placed in a glass receptacle, so dimmed with

grease and dirt as almost to render it opaque, or, at least, to give it the appearance of a dark lantern, shed down on the entrance a dull and ambiguous light. Through this door we entered; a short passage with boarded sides led to another door covered over with green baize. Edmund pushed this open, and my eyes were dazzled with a strong glare of light, and I found myself in the billiard room.

I remember still the appearance of the room; my own feelings magnified everything into an importance that fixed it on my memory. At one end of the room there was a fire-place; near this sat a little, ill-looking man, who was to act as marker; a large fire was burning in the grate; an individual stood with his back to it, apparently wishing merely to pass time. I use the term individual, because his claims to the appellation of gentleman, on the score of appearance, were somewhat ambiguous, as my readers will presently perceive. I was surprised to see him take his pipe out of his mouth, and address Edmund most familiarly. This drew my attention a little more to his dress. He wore a white hat, considerably dinged

at one side ; a blue frock coat, in which the whiteness of the seams had already caused an agreeable variegation of its proper hue ; and a pair of white trousers—that is, with many colours diffused over a white ground, not long enough to conceal much of a clumsy pair of boots that were bursting at all their seams. These, with a formidable pair of moustachios, and a party-coloured cravat, somewhat the worse for wear, completed the contour that presented itself to my narrow scrutiny.

“Are you for a match to-night ?” asked he, again taking the pipe out of his mouth, and at the same time spitting on the floor.

“No,” answered Edmund ; “I am going to teach this gentleman to play.”

“To teach him !” said the other with an oath, laying an emphasis on the word, and the habitual leer of his features increased to a malicious grin. “If you wish”—with another tremendous imprecation—“to oblige a friend, I’ll save you the trouble.”

“And the devil a better instructor than yourself, Captain, the gentleman could get within the four walls of the city,” chimed in the little

wretch, whom I have already described as marker, casting a peculiarly knowing look at the somewhat ambiguous personage whom he thus addressed by the military title of captain. The other puffed a larger volume of smoke from his pipe, which he had duly returned to his mouth, looked a peculiar look, and made no reply. It was, however, ultimately arranged that, for that night, at least, I was not to be handed over to the kind instructions of the Captain: the marker volunteered me a few pieces of advice; and I was beginning, after a few strokes, to handle my cue with some adroitness, and to give the balls good smart blows.

"Was Mr. Wilson here to-day, John?" asked the captain, addressing himself to the marker.

"In faith he was, sir," replied the other; "it's a pity you were not here yourself; we had a great pool just before dinner-time."

"And how did Mr. Wilson get off?" asked Edmund.

"Oh, what did he take off?" said the other, in the Irishman's fashion of answering a question.

"Were they playing high?" said Edmund.

"No, not to say very high, ten shilling stakes, and crown lives."

"Who were they?" asked the Captain, with a peculiar intonation, and a half smile.

"Augh! you don't know any of them, Captain," answered the marker, with a manner that affected peculiar innocence.

I do not know whether it was that I was too much interested in observing the conversation, or that I was naturally awkward—indeed, I believe I was indulging my propensity to observe character, and making some very philosophical reflections—but, just then in making a stroke at the ball, my cue slipped, and, to my consternation, a long reef ran half-way across the green cloth which covered the table.

"Tare-an-ouns, sir!" cried the marker, "how did you do that?"

"D—n it, man!" cried Edmund, "could not you mind yourself?"

"I think, sir," said the Captain, sarcastically, "Mr. Connor's tuition does not thrive with you."

I heard a loud, although a suppressed laugh, from two young men who had just entered the

room, and the whispered epithet of "spooney" saluted my ears.

"This is a terrible thing entirely," said the marker, as he looked unmeaningly at the reef of my handiwork. "It was an elegant new cloth;" and he began laying down the torn parts with a cue which he carried in his hand.

"It will take another needle than that to sew it, Jack," said one of the new comers; and the whole company laughed, or affected to laugh, at this sally, the wit of which I did not exactly understand.

Jack, however, took care that I should understand and feel its point: this he did effectually, by intimating that I was to pay two guineas for tearing the cloth, adding, "that by rights I should pay three; but he would not be hard on me."

"Whatever the cloth costs, of course I must pay," said I, proudly pulling myself up, with a dignity that I meant to silence the jeers in which some of the company appeared disposed to indulge.

Two guineas, however, was the ultimatum of Jack's demands; and here was a new difficulty.

I had not so much about me; this, of course, gave rise to new sallies of wit on the part of the knowing ones, who seemed disposed to retaliate on me for the mock dignity I had assumed the minute before.

"Oh, Jack, you will trust the *gentleman* for so much," said one of the new comers.

"It was well, sir," said the Captain to me, "that Jack did not close with your generous and very handsome offer of giving him more than he asked."

I felt my anger rising. I think the Captain saw some indications of my rising choler; for he added, in a milder and less sarcastic tone, "believe me, sir, when you know the world as well as I do, you will never think it necessary to offer a billiard-marker more than he asks."

"At least, sir," said I, meaning to be very good-humoured, "not to make any offer that I have not money to pay."

A loud laugh ran round the room, and the Captain's discomfited look told me that I had unintentionally made a hit—of the nature of it I am unfortunately still ignorant—but it was evident that the object of it was a little sore.

The matter was ended, however, by Edmund lending me the two guineas, which he did promptly enough. I paid dearly for my sport, and we left the room. As we passed through the boarded passage I have already mentioned, I heard a loud burst of rude laughter, mingled occasionally with oaths, and cries of "spooney." I was glad when we were once more in the still court, and more glad when I found myself again in the bustle of the street. And this was my first and last essay at billiard playing. It seemed, however, as if having paid thus dearly for my introduction to the billiard-table, I was to be requited by a more extensive acquaintance with its mysteries than is generally made in the course of a single evening. It happened that Edmund wished particularly to see Wilson, and I accompanied him in quest of him. Edmund said that we should be almost sure to find him in another billiard room in —— Street, and thither accordingly we directed our steps. It seemed altogether a much more respectable place than the one we had just left. It was within a few feet of one of the best streets in the city. We

turned down a lane, which I knew as leading to the livery-stables of one of the fashionable hotels. Along one side of this lane ran a dead wall, the other was occupied with houses of an inferior description ; a door opened just where the dead wall joined the gable of the house that fronted the street. On entering this door, you went a little way along a narrow passage inside the wall, and a flight of stone steps conducted you up to large and spacious billiard-rooms. I well remember there were two small glass windows, perhaps I should say peepholes, in the door, through which you could see what was passing inside. Edmund stopped an instant, as if to reconnoitre, and then we both went in.

I deem it right to mention, for reasons which my readers will presently appreciate, that these billiard rooms are not now in existence. Some years since they were abandoned. Indeed I believe the rooms were pulled down, and a large hotel built upon the site.

There were a good many persons in the room. Wilson was engaged at play with a stranger ; the progress of the game appeared to excite very considerable interest in the minds of the specta-

tors ; and, if I were to judge by Wilson's demeanour, he felt very anxious as to its result. His face was quite flushed, although he had taken off his coat ; and every time, when it came to his adversary's turn to play, he rubbed a bit of chalk to his cue with a violence that was, perhaps, the only symptom of agitation which he showed.

Edmund and I took our seats upon a bench that ran along the wall and was allotted to the spectators. Wilson took hardly any notice of our entrance. When we had been some minutes seated, he addressed some words to Edmund which I did not hear. I soon, however, became sensible that this was a particular match, upon which large bets were depending. Wilson had very much the worst of the game. His manner now became visibly agitated ; that of his opponent was perfectly cool. There was a profound silence throughout the room, only broken by the shrill voice of the marker, as he told the game, and occasionally a stamp on the floor and an imprecation from Wilson, as he cursed his bad luck, after having attempted some unsuccessful stroke.

The stranger, who was a middle-aged, gentlemanly man, seemed now quite confident of success; and I soon discovered that the spectators had a deeper interest in the game than that of mere curiosity. In fact, they had bet largely on the issue. Odds were now offered against Wilson: his opponent had just counted—I believe I should say scored—a considerable number of points. Wilson flung his cravat with vehemence from his neck, and seemed for a few minutes pondering on the balls. His eye lit up, and he seemed just about to make a stroke, when a large, vulgar-looking man, who sat in a corner, exclaimed—

“Five to one against the striker!”

Wilson paused, and looked still more attentively at the balls.

“Five to one against the striker!” repeated the gentleman in the corner.

“I’ll take you, sir,” said Wilson, looking calmly round.

“Done, sir!” said the other.

“In five pound notes?” said Wilson; and as the other assented, the flush upon his cheek kindled to a hectic brightness. A murmur ran

round the room. A tall, fashionably-dressed young man, who was smoking a cigar, said—

“Wilson, you are a fool!”

“If you think so,” said Wilson, “I’ll take you the same bet.”

“Done, by ——!” said the other; and he pronounced the oath with a heartiness of intonation that made my blood run cold.

Wilson played; and I could understand, by the buzz of applause which followed, that he had executed some very difficult stroke. He seemed inspired by his bet—he gained rapidly upon the scores of his antagonist—and the result of the game appeared still to be questionable. I felt myself take a deep interest in his success. It is strange how ready we are to sympathize with the exertions of those who seem struggling against defeat. I disliked Wilson. If my feelings towards him influenced me, it was to make me wish to see him lose; and yet I felt rejoiced as each successive stroke diminished the majority of his antagonist. At last they came to an equality; they were within four of counting game; it was the stranger’s play, and Wilson shook his head as if all was lost. Not a word

was spoken, as the player aimed with all the appearance of unerring certainty. Wilson's eye rested on his adversary's cue—his lips were white—his eye kindled up as the balls rolled away from the stroke of his opponent, and, after many rollings, rested harmless on the table.

"They are safe," cried the player, evidently disappointed that he had not succeeded.

Wilson's keen eye surveyed the measurement of the table for an instant. He then aimed his cue; and the next moment the marker announced that he had won the match.

The silence which had so long reigned through the apartment was now broken by half-a-dozen voices, some raised to angry tones. Those who had won their bets exulted in the sagacity for which they took credit; those who had lost asserted that Wilson had won the game by a "*fluke*." At the time I was ignorant enough not to understand the meaning of this term. If any of my readers are in the same predicament, I should, perhaps, explain that it means a stroke for which the player is indebted more to chance than to skill—to borrow the words of an old proverb, if I may do so without annexing the

very expressive though quaint illustration—one gained “more by good luck than good guiding.”

Upon this there was some hot altercation; Wilson contending that he had played for what he made, the others as stoutly asserting that it must have been a “fluke.” The dispute, however, was ended by Wilson’s replacing the balls in their original position, and offering to bet five pounds that he would make the stroke again.

The bet was taken, and Wilson won.

I now found that Wilson’s antagonist was a celebrated player from London, and that Wilson and he had played for a very large bet.

The Englishman would not yet confess himself defeated. He challenged Wilson to repeat the contest. Wilson proposed the next evening, at the instigation of Edmund, who wanted him elsewhere: the other, however, would not be put off, and, notwithstanding Edmund’s solicitations, Wilson commenced another match. It was now getting late, and Edmund and I retired from the room. As we passed down the stone steps which I have already described, our attention was caught by a curious and, although not a secret, yet a well-concealed passage, which

led from behind the steps under the building. With a natural curiosity, we determined to explore it. It was flagged and vaulted overhead, something like those subterranean caverns which you may read of as belonging to old castles in romances, or see in the cellars of a wine merchant. We carried on our researches a considerable way before we could discover its use, or anything to which it could lead. We went but a little way before we were altogether screened from the moonlight, and left in a darkness whose shadow was heightened by the contrast with the silvery whiteness of the flags upon which the light fell. In this darkness we could distinctly see a very faint gleam of light, as if issuing from the crevices of a well-joined door ; and accordingly we found a door—low, and pointed at top in a Gothic arch ; opening, evidently, on an apartment directly under the billiard-room. To this door Edmund cautiously advanced. There was no key-hole : the light had proceeded from the very slight and almost imperceptible crevice that marked the joining of the door to the wall ; and even underneath, the door fitted so exactly, that its separation from the flags was scarcely

marked by a line of red light. We heard, however, the confused sound of voices within. There was a strange and mingled buzz of voices, now raised to a loud tone, now falling to a whisper. There seemed, to my mind, something unnatural, at least unearthly, in the sound. I could not help thinking of all the tales I had read of fiends feasting ; and I almost expected that the door would open and disclose to us their infernal rites.

I have a distinct recollection of these horrible impressions being upon my mind, and I feel sure that there was something even in the very tones of the indistinct sounds that reached my ear that harmonised with these gloomy thoughts. I put my forehead against the door to listen more attentively, and I was startled by its coldness—it was an iron door. As I listened I could distinguish the words of persons inside engaged at some game of chance. I became conscious that I stood at the entrance of a hell ; and a hell, in every sense, it seemed to be. I heard the rattling of dice, and now and then some terrible imprecation, couched in accents of fearful blasphemy, came to my ear with the bitter and yet fierce intonations of a voice that

spoke all the bad passions of the human heart. Edmund stood beside me : he seemed rivetted to the spot. I know not how long we might have listened, but that we were startled by the sound of footsteps echoing in the passage along which we had come ourselves. Edmund was the first to perceive them. He pulled me gently from the door : we both retreated into a nook which was a little farther on. A rough projection of the wall, intended for what purpose I do not know, afforded us a hiding-place, and in the deep shadow our persons were effectually concealed. Two figures walked slowly up the passage : though we could not be seen ourselves, we could see them distinctly between us and the distant light. They were engaged in earnest conversation. They stopped within a few feet of where we stood, so that we could overhear everything that they said. I did not feel quite comfortable in thus acting as it were the part of a spy ; and yet I almost feared to meet any one in that dark passage. Edmund, as if he instinctively comprehended my desire to move, laid his hand upon my arm, and squeezed it in intimation that I was to stand still.

"I am almost ruined," were the first words I caught, in a voice which I recognised as having heard in the billiard room.

I could not distinctly hear the reply, which was made in a whisper.

"Why," replied the first speaker, "to-morrow I must go to gaol. I may drown myself"—and a deep groan finished more expressively all he would have said.

"Ten shillings is all I have in the world," he resumed; "but who knows what fortune may do for me to-night? You will keep my secret?" said he to his companion.

They both advanced to the door; but just as they seemed about to enter, they stopped, and resumed their conversation. Their voices fell to a very low whisper, but I overheard the mention of Wilson's name, and I could gather that he, too, was involved in very great difficulties. As well as I could distinguish, they appeared to speak of some victim whom Wilson was to allure to this den of thieves. I could not, however, be certain. Just as I was engaged in attempting to catch more distinctly what they said upon the subject, an accident disturbed us. Edmund

leaned forward to listen the more earnestly : he stood upon some loose fragments of stone, which had been piled up in the corner, and in his anxiety to hear more distinctly, he lost his balance, and slipped off the stone on which he stood. He caught my arm, and recovered his position ; but the noise which he made attracted the attention of the two whisperers.

One of them started and seemed alarmed. "Eh, d——n it ! what was that ? Who's there ?" he said, raising his voice louder.

Edmund and I remained silent : the inquirer advanced a step forward—"There is surely some one here—some damned strange noise," he exclaimed, as he attempted to peer into the darkness.

"Nonsense," said the other ; "it was a rat : there are great quantities of them here."

His companion seemed satisfied. It struck me that he was afraid to come forward. He went back, and said, "There is no use in stopping in this dark, dismal passage, where one always hears such ugly noises. Come, we will go in." They gave a tap, that evidently was a signal, at the door. There was no answer. The

tap was repeated. Still no answer. The third time, however, there was something like the dragging of a chain which appeared to be thrown across the door inside ; there was then the heavy shooting of a ponderous lock, and the iron door rolled heavily on its hinges. The two denizens of the place were admitted, and the door instantaneously closed. Their entrance seemed to be greeted with some expressions of boisterous welcome—to my mind it sounded fearfully as the voice of “laughter that was not glad” echoed along the stone roof of the passage—and then was suddenly cut short by the closing of the door. There was again the shooting of the bolt and the rattling of the chain ; the glare of light which had been thrown for a moment on the rough and unplastered wall of the passage, was interrupted, and all was dark and silent as before.

We walked gently away. Our footsteps, softly as we trod, echoed strangely in the damp atmosphere of the passage. Neither of us spoke until we had once more reached the open air.

“Well,” said Edmund, “I long suspected this. I often had heard these fellows had a hell ;

but I could not conceive where. I often remarked the owner of the rooms go suddenly out, as if called away—of course by some secret signal—to the place underneath.”

“Did you hear your friend Wilson’s name mentioned?” said I.

“I thought I did ; but it was just as it caught my ear that I slipped from the stone.”

The prevailing feeling of Edmund’s mind seemed to be curiosity—a desire to be a witness to the mysteries of which we had thus accidentally got a glimpse. He spoke of the interior of a hell as if it were a fearful and yet a grand spectacle, which it would be worth while to see. His imagination seemed absolutely inflamed with the melodramatic interest of the scene which he expected it to be. He hinted that he would get Wilson to take him there. I argued with him on the folly of this.

“Ah,” he answered, “have you not often told me how grand it was to study human nature, and to trace human passion—where will I see either as I see it there? I am curious to see the inside, just as I would see any other

sight. I would wish to know what gambling is."

Alas ! what a dangerous passion of the human heart is curiosity ! Man has a curiosity as sin—he has a desire to know it. He longs, like our first parent, to eat of the forbidden apple, not so much because it is pleasant to his appetite, as because he would know good and evil. This is the secret of that perverse desire to do what is forbidden, which moralists have all remarked in our nature. "Vain man would be wise;" and the knowledge, the practical knowledge of sin, seems to him a part of being wise : it seems to his imagination as if he multiplied his existence when he can throw it into new shapes. Alas ! this cursed desire to know what sin is, has cost many a one his innocence. Many a one has eaten of the poison from a wish to satisfy his morbid curiosity, as to its savour. Thus does that which he plucks as from the tree of knowledge become the fruit of death. I have often thought there was a deep mystery in the story of man's fall, as if the fate of her by whom sin first came into the world was to be but the prototype of many another fall ; and the

first crime the world ever witnessed might stand as a warning against the fatal curiosity which was its cause.

It was this curiosity—I have no other word to designate the feeling, which perhaps can be better understood than described—it was curiosity that ruined a world, and still the same principle which we have all inherited from our first mother is remaining, and will ruin many a one who gives way to its impulses to evil.

From the night whose occurrences I have mentioned, I had but too much reason to fear that Edmund had been drawn into all the fatal fascinations of the accursed gambling-table. He generally laughed me off when I approached the subject: I could hardly ever get him to speak seriously upon it. I did not need, however, his confession to tell me that his midnight hours were devoted to the unholy and unhealthy occupation. Often would I find him rising from his bed at noon-day, pale, and apparently unrefreshed; and once or twice he did acknowledge that he had played hazard, and had lost considerable sums.

Meanwhile his passion for Letitia appeared to

gather strength, and increase in vehemence ; and I often thought that it was only my convenience as a confidant that prevented the total separation between us, which otherwise my often repeated rebukes of his courses might have caused. He sometimes left me in a passion when I said anything peculiarly severe ; but then he was sure to return, to tell me, perhaps, some dream he had about Letitia, or some mark of kindness which she had shewn him ; because, strange to say, he had never yet ventured to make her any declaration of his attachment : indeed, he had not, at this time, many opportunities, and the few which he had, he declared he never had courage to avail himself of.

“ Is it not absurd ? ” he would sometimes say to me ; “ I think Letitia loves me. She must know—she must see that I love her, and yet, time after time I determined to tell her all my heart, and to hear from her own lips the words that would make me happy ; and I seek opportunities of being with her alone : but when we are alone—why, then I can talk to her of anything but love.”

I sometimes could not help laughing at him.

It struck me, however, that his passion might be turned to good account. "Do you think," I asked him seriously, "that ever Letitia will marry a professed gambler?"

He started. He seemed angry. "I am not a professed gambler. I do not deserve the name of gambler at all," said he quickly.

"A gambler," said I, "is a man who gambles. A professed gambler is a man who devotes his time to gambling, and one whom everybody knows to do so."

"This is not fair," he answered. "Everybody does not know that I play. Besides, your definition is false. A gambler is a man who plays for the sake of the money that he wins; a gambler is a man who will defraud you if he can; a gambler is a man who regards every opponent as his prey; and a professed gambler is one who makes this his business and his support. I do not deserve either of these characters. I love excitement, and if it costs me some money, I can afford to pay for it."

I saw that, under all his apparent coolness, he was nettled. I thought it better to say no more, and he soon left my room.

Next morning he came over to my chambers at an early hour. He seemed very much embarrassed. He walked several times up and down the room. At last he asked me, with more of solemnity than it had latterly been his custom to assume,—“Tell me seriously, had you any meaning last night, when you said that Letitia Jephson would not marry a gambler?”

His eye rested on me with a piercing intensity of glance, his cheek was flushed with a crimson colour. I looked steadily at him, and answered—

“I generally make it a rule to have some meaning when I speak; and, in the present instance, I do not think my words were very enigmatical.”

“Well, then,” said he, “if you thus quibble, had you any authority for saying so?”

“No,” I replied. “I do not think I required any particular authority for such a statement. The girl must be mad who would ‘set her life upon a cast.’ Would you, Edmund, wish to see any girl whom you cared for, united to a destiny that is staked every evening upon the throw of the dice?”

He was visibly agitated. He walked up and

down more rapidly ; he then stopped, and said :
“ Mr. O’Brien, you do me injustice. I have played, perhaps, more than I ought ; but, indeed—indeed, I am not a gambler. Do not suppose that I would dare to seek Letitia’s love, if I felt that my success would make her happiness depend upon a cast. No, no ! I have been drawn into play—I have lost money, God forgive me, that might be better employed ; but I am not a gambler. Never,” continued he earnestly, “ never call me by that horrid name. You do not know what a gambler is, or you would not. You have never seen what I have, or you would not call me gambler, and stay in the room with me. Call me fool ! fiend ! anything but gambler !”

I was startled by his earnestness, I should rather say his vehemence of manner. I cautioned him against deserving the name of which he had such a horror.

“ Deserve it !” interrupted he fiercely. “ I know but of one man who deserves it—one hardened, soulless, heartless wretch—one who can lay his snares with coolness.”—He stopped short, as if fearful he had said too much.

I almost hoped he meant Wilson. I hinted as much.

"No ! no ! Wilson is no gambler. I won't tell you who or what it is I mean ; but I have been witness to one scene. God forbid that ever I should be witness to such another ; but I prevented villany. But this is wrong : they consider it a point of honour that these things should not be told."

I did not wish to ask the communication of what there was any obligation on his part to conceal. He seemed anxious to tell it.

"I have not moral courage," he continued. "I cannot despise the threatenings of the bad."

"There was," he added slowly, "there was a victim drawn in by the gambler of whom I spoke, and he would have been robbed. There was foul cheater ; but I exposed him—I showed his knavery. He was ignominiously expelled—he had too little honour for a den of thieves ; but he threatened me—he told me that he would track my steps—that he would hunt me—these were his words—he declared that he would have revenge. What thoughts cross the

mind! When you said Letitia would never marry a gambler, I thought he had his revenge—that he had told the Jephsons that I gambled. All night I lay awake, and this horrid thought kept a racking hold upon my brain. Thank God! it was but a vain imagination.”

I assured him that, as far as I knew, it was so. I reasoned with him seriously on giving over all play. I endeavoured to point out the ruin which it must entail not only on his fortune, but on all his habits and feelings. He promised that he would. I asked him for his solemn promise that he would never enter a hell again. He hesitated. At last he told me that he owed some debts of honour, which he must discharge—he had promised to do so—at the gambling-table that night, and he must keep his word.

“You would not have me break my word? You would not have those who praised me a few nights ago for conduct that they called honourable—you would not have them look on me to-night as a breaker of my engagement?”

Go I perceived he would, and I trembled for him. Edmund’s was a weak character. Too much the child of impulse to have steadiness

of purpose, I knew that the resolution of the morning would be lost in the excitement of the night. Next day my heart boded ill for him, as I met him walking with Wilson in familiar conversation. I attempted, when next we met, to make him recur to the promise which he had all but given me. Alas! it seemed as if the day of grace was gone by. He laughed—he laughed—at his own exhibition of feeling upon the subject: he said this was the way he always magnified everything; he spoke of the nervous excitability of his temperament (big words which, I believe, he had learned from his physician or some medical book); and he broke away from my arguments and intreaties with a song.

He took, however, another opportunity of assuring me that he never played; but added, that to bind himself never to enter a gaming-house was a nonsensical proceeding. “Such vows,” said he, laughing, “like oaths against whiskey, are regarded just as long as the temptation is not too strong for the judgment, but no longer. They never are binding but when they are superfluous.” I feared that he refused the promise because he knew the obligation would

CHAPTER I.—THE BILLIARD TABLE. 61

be irksome. But it is time for me to return to the Jephsons, whom my readers probably suppose that I have forgotten.

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The genial days of spring had been succeeded by the long hot ones of the summer. Early in the month of May my relatives had left their town residence, and had retired to a beautifully situated cottage some miles from the city, at the base of the county Dublin mountains. I used to laugh at Edmund, and tell him that in this romantic spot he could make love with a good heart. And a romantic spot it truly was. Villas, and terraces, and avenues had not then sprung up round the environs of Dublin, and made the country for miles round but a ruralized continuation of the city.

Woodbine Cottage—for thus had it pleased the fancy of the proprietor to name the spot of which I speak—its name was borrowed, I believe, from a solitary and unhealthy-looking stalk

of woodbine, that scarcely vegetated against one of the pillars of the gate. It was the only bit of woodbine about the place, and it was the only thing that did not seem to flourish; but Woodbine Cottage it was called. It was situated just on the rise of that chain of hills which extend to the southward of the city, and are known as the county of Dublin mountains. A few trees planted around it relieved the wildness of the scenery that rose immediately behind. At a short distance behind the house rose Mount Venus, covered half way up its sides with a young plantation of thick fir trees, of so dark a shade of green, that you could hardly distinguish them from the black heather above. Farther away again was the Three-Rock Mountain, raising its three peaks in bleak and desolate grandeur. In the far distance you could get a glimpse of Killiney and the Hill of Howth to the east. To the south and west lay mountains piled upon mountains, which you could only distinguish from each other by the long black line of deeper shadow that marked the ravine that separated them; and a little to

the north-west the ground sloped gently up from the plain in which stands the city, until it met the horizon on the eminence called Tal-laght Hill. Close by, under the very base of Mount Venus, ran the valley of the Dodder, and the river itself winding on between the steep banks of white gravel, in the deep channel which the fierce mountain torrent had scooped out for itself; while down along its banks lay a rich and fertile country, clothed all over with plantations. But I must not spend too much time in description. Such of my readers as have ever gone out into the country beyond Rathfarnham, where the little church called Whitechurch stands on the base of the hill, raising its spire to heaven, as if to testify man's worship to Him who fixed on their bases these everlasting hills—for these I have said enough to enable them to understand the locality I have endeavoured to describe.

In this beautiful retreat the Jephsons had resolved to pass the summer, principally on account of Letitia's health, with whom even her eight hours' harp playing did not very well agree. Poor Letitia was delighted. She was overjoyed at the prospect of being permitted to

wander about the fields, and breathe the pure air as it came down with renovating freshness from the hills. Indeed, the whole party seemed happy. My aunt had just received a letter from her second son, who was in the navy, acquainting her with his promotion to the office of commander, a step which he had obtained at a peculiarly early age. Her eldest son had, a little time before, obtained a commission in a dragoon regiment. The flirtation, too, between Caroline and her rich fool was progressing as favourably as could be expected; and so all seemed happy and contented.

And Edmund was not the least happy. He was now as intimate with the family as I was; indeed, his vivacity made him more so. He was constantly with Letitia; she could hardly stir but he followed her. He would sometimes deck her hair with a garland of wild flowers, which he gathered in the fields; and she seemed pleased with all his familiarities; and yet, strange to say, no word of love had ever passed between them. There was a strange, an unaccountable timidity about Edmund, that prevented him from making any explicit declara-

tion. However, even if their own feelings had not been their best interpreters, Caroline took care that they should be at no loss to understand each other, since she constantly made it a point to rally them in each other's presence upon their fondness for each other's company.

My aunt was no unobservant spectator of all this, and she appeared not a little puzzled to comprehend it. I remember well the means by which she endeavoured to unravel the mystery which she deemed Edmund's conduct to involve. One evening we were all sitting in the drawing-room, which opened on a beautiful view. The day had been hot; but a cool breeze of the evening had tempered the atmosphere. We had the windows up, and Edmund, I, and my two cousins were sitting, talking, and laughing, when my aunt entered the room, prepared for walking.

"Come, Edward," said she, "we will leave these young people to their follies, and we will take a quiet walk in the garden!"

"And why," said Letitia, "mamma, why should not Edward stay and join in our follies?"

"Indeed," answered my aunt, "I am sure he is too sensible to enjoy your nonsense."

"A nice compliment you pay Mr. Connor," said Caroline.

My aunt's object was, however, to get me with her; and Edmund, to tell the truth, did not seem much annoyed at the classification which left him with the foolish people. I could not help remarking that Letitia blushed, and seemed agitated as I rose to obey her mother's command. I was going to rally her upon it, but my aunt hurried me away.

She took me down a shady walk, covered over with laurels and hollies. She evidently was about to speak to me of something of importance; she looked round several times, as if to be sure that she could not be overheard; and when she thought we were quite secure from interruption, she began very solemnly—

"Edward, my dear, I wish to speak to you upon a matter which is of very great consequence to my happiness;" and she looked full in my face with a confused expression.

"One would suppose," thought I, "that my aunt was going to make a declaration of love to me."

"Your friend Connor," continued she, "has

been paying Letitia the most marked attention ; and you may perceive that he has met with no discouragement : but it is very odd that he never has said anything that could give her reason to think he was attached to her."

"Oh," said I, laughing, "Letitia does not tell you all these things. He may have said fifty things that you never heard of."

"No, no," she answered earnestly, "I asked her the question. Edward," said she, a girl's happiness is not to be trifled with in this way. A flirtation may be very good fun for you young men ; but it is no fun for a girl."

My aunt sighed very sentimentally, as if in recollection of some youthful disappointment. I thought she had more feeling than I ever before gave her credit for. I told her honestly all I knew of Edmund Connor's feelings. I said that I believed his attachment was of the strongest kind ; but I told her he was a very bad hand at making love.

"He is afraid to tell Letitia that he loves her."

"What kind of a fool is he?" asked my aunt indignantly.

I professed my inability to solve this problem ;

but, in reply to her repeated inquiries as to whether I was certain that the report as to the state of his feelings was correct, I assured her that I knew it was ; that nothing but the highest sense of honour could ever influence any action of Edmund Connor's ; and that at that moment he felt himself as much engaged to Letitia as if he had sworn to her to marry her.

My aunt seemed relieved ; she said she was very glad we had this conversation ; she would tell this all to Letitia, who, "poor thing, had been fretting about it very much."

I began to think that Edmund was fortunate in thus having love made for him by proxy. To be sure, his declaration passed through two hands to the young lady ; but still it came. I fancied nothing the worse for that. I reflected upon the strange interview I had with Mrs. Jephson. At first I thought her conduct strange ; but, when I thought on it, I looked upon it as only natural and right. No mother could or ought to be indifferent to her daughter's peace of mind, and I was the only person to whom she could apply ; and, though I at first felt inclined to condemn the proceeding as a bit of

match-making, when I remembered Edmund's conduct I looked upon it as only a proper piece of motherly prudence and care.

I know not how it was, but during the progress of this summer I began to feel an affection for my relatives, such as I had never done before.

I was surprised, as it were, at the development of many amiable traits which I had not before perceived in their characters. Before this, I had seen them in the gay round of fashionable dissipation; I had now gone with them into the privacy of retirement, and it seemed as if they had lost more than half the worldliness which I hated. There is, after all, much that is good and that is amiable in human nature; and not all the coldness of fashion, not all the heartless influences of a selfish and an intriguing world, can utterly suppress the kindly emotions of the heart, or kill those charities of life that shed their holy charm upon the sweetness of domestic intercourse. Even the votaries of fashion, or the worshippers of interest appear to forget their idolatries in the magic enchantment of home, and the most artificial creature that a world has spoiled, returns to the kindliness, and

almost the artlessness of nature, by the domestic fireside. Often had I thought the Jephsons worldly and selfish : worldly they still were ; ay, and perhaps selfish ; yet now, when I came within the family circle, there was the same happy innocence and glee as if no worldly or selfish thoughts had been ever in their minds. Hitherto I had seen them but in the crowd of frivolity and dissipation ; but now they breathed a freer atmosphere, and it seemed as if the unaffected sympathies of their hearts at length had room to vegetate and expand.

During the summer Edmund and I passed most of our time at Woodbine Cottage ; and still the remembrance of these days comes over my mind like the dream of a happy time. The Jephsons lived in very great retirement ; most of their gay friends of the winter season had gone to ruralize in more distant parts of the country ; and with the exception of Mr. Thomas, " Caroline's mad lover," as we used to call him, but few visitors disturbed the tranquillity of their retirement. Mr. Jephson, who was a quiet, unobtrusive person, altogether under the management of his wife, enjoyed this so much, that he

declared solemnly he never would return to the routs and parties of the town. "God made the country," he used to add; "but man made cities"—sentiments which my aunt always answered by the brief but pithy comment of "folly!" an authoritative interjection, which, delivered in a peculiar tone, precluded all farther controversy on the subject.

But the brightest days will pass away; and happy as was this summer, it drew to its close. The evenings were already growing shorter, and the soft moonlight would sometimes surprise us by discovering our shadows on the grass before we were conscious that even the twilight had come. Occasionally, too, in the evenings, a chilly breeze came down from the hills, and the fields were getting brown with the golden tints of the ripening grain. Say what we will of the charms of spring and summer, there is no season like the autumn. It is said that Milton never could write poetry except in the autumn; and I do not wonder. There is a spirit of solemn and sober stillness abroad upon an autumn day that you meet at no other time. The hot and forward glow of the summer sun is softened down

to a modest and gentle radiance ; the very landscape partakes of the sombre quiet of the season ; its hues are not like the hues that arrayed it in summer. The autumn is to the year what the evening is to the day ; nature sinks into repose, and the very air, as it stirs around you, has a feel peculiar to the atmosphere of autumn, and every sense seems able to distinguish its peculiarities. Let those who will praise the sultriness of summer and the pettishness of inconstant, fickle spring ; but give me the autumn day, when all nature seems resting in the tranquillity of a deep, although a quiet joy ; when the beams of the sun come less intense, and mellowed in their course through the thin grey clouds that robe the sky, and cast the reflection of their own greyness upon the landscape. Still that landscape has its variety of hues—less brilliant than those that decked the gaudy robe of summer, but far more beautiful. There is the heather upon the hills, already beginning to change its colour as the blossoms of the summer fall down beside each branch, and expose the redness of the twig upon which they grew. There are the russet fields of grain, waving to and fro

in one golden undulation as the breeze sweeps the lights and shadows across their surface. And then in the forest, how many tints do the changing leaves assume as the first breath of autumn has come over their verdure with its discolouring rebuke? Spring may be the childhood of the year, with its gleams and showers, like the variations of inconstant childhood; summer may be its hot and fiery youth; then autumn is its manhood, sinking into the solemnity of middle life, with all the repose of years, but none of the weakness or the gloom of old age.

It was an autumn day, such as I have attempted to describe, that Edmund gathered courage to make that formal declaration of love which he had so long and, to the young lady, so distressingly put off. Her anxieties, it is true, had been somewhat diminished by the assurance which I had been the means of conveying to her. Still I could perceive that she thought Edmund's silence very provoking, and both she and her mamma, especially the latter, had given him some hints upon the subject. I had not felt myself at liberty to repeat to him my conversation with Mrs. Jephson—he did not know, therefore, that

she had any definite information of his attachment beyond that which she might easily have gathered from his demeanour. I then often laughed at his folly, as I termed his timidity. I attributed it to some peculiarity of his strange disposition. I since found that this nervousness of apprehension was not quite an idiosyncrasy of his passion, and that in many a heart—perhaps the heart that loves best and most warmly—there is that sensitiveness of feeling, so that the last thing upon which the lover will venture, is a declaration of his love. I might pass over the next few passages without much loss to my narrative; but my fair readers would not forgive me if I lost the opportunity of presenting them with a love scene.

It was early in the month of September that it happened; one morning I was occupied in some particular manner, and could not accompany Edmund in his visit to Woodbine Cottage—he did not, indeed, seem very unwilling to go alone. When he arrived there, he was told by the servant who opened the door that there was no one at home but Mr. Jephson. Edmund was disappointed; he found the old gentleman

poring over the columns of a newspaper. He gave him a hearty and an honest welcome. Edmund learned from him that Mr. Jephson and Caroline had driven into town to pay some visits. "I wonder," added he, "you did not meet them, but you will find Letitia in the garden—I believe she is eating the last of the currants, and perhaps that will be better employment for you than sitting with a stupid old man."

Edmund was not slow to act upon the hint; and a few minutes more found him in the garden. He found Letitia, but not just as unsentimentally employed as her father had predicted. Large and grape-like bunches of currants hung neglected and withering upon the trees; and even the more tempting display of large black cherries, from banquetting on which his approach started a whole flight of birds, possessed no attractions either for Letitia or him who sought her. He directed his steps to a little bower, or summer-house, where he knew that she was in the habit of sitting—a walk, running between a tall beech hedge and a row of well-grown laurels, led down to it; under the shelter

of a large oak tree was constructed a rustic summer-house; the sides were lined with moss and covered over with the woodbine and honeysuckle.

In this favourite retreat he found Letitia sitting. She seemed unconscious of his approach, although from where she sat she could command a view of the long vista through which the walk lay; but she was, probably, absorbed in meditation; her one hand scarcely held a volume which rested on her knee; in the other, she held a rose, whose red colour finely set off, by its contrast, the snowy whiteness of her delicate hand—she gazed upon the flower with a sad and yet a sweet expression, and a large tear was trickling from her soft blue eye, and one had even strayed so far as to fall upon the leaves of the volume which lay apparently unheeded upon her knee. Edmund paused at the entrance of the bower: he never had seen her look so beautiful before; the carelessness of her attitude; the seeming unconsciousness that she was observed; the tear of sentiment still trembling on the lashes that fringed an eye that seemed made for softness, and the snowy hand

along whose delicate texture you could trace the meandering of each blue vein—and the rose—Edmund was not long in perceiving that it had been pulled from a tree which he himself had, at a late period of the year, removed from the garden to that bower, whose consequently doubtful progress Letitia and he had watched together. She was then thinking of him; she was weeping at the thought of him; a thousand confused emotions passed across his mind—he stopped one instant more to gaze upon such loveliness, the next instant found him by her side.

He roused her from her meditations by some common-place observation; perhaps by conveying to her the very superfluous information that she was “all alone,” or by asking the equally superfluous question, if she was so—it was little matter what were the words; the sound of his voice was enough, no matter what accents it conveyed. It brought the blood in a quick and sudden glow to her pale cheeks as she turned round to welcome him. Edmund’s face became as scarlet as her own, and for some minutes neither of them spoke. At last he remarked the

rosebud in her hand. "Well," said he, "you told me my rose-tree would not grow, I removed it so late in the year, and I told you you should wear its flowers."

She twirled the rose-tree quickly in her hand, and began smelling its fragrance, as if to conceal emotions that she could not control—the rose was not more crimson than the cheek with which it thus came in contact.

Edmund took from her the book. She endeavoured to grasp it, but he succeeded in getting it disengaged from her hand—it was Zimmerman on Solitude.

"Why," he said, "you surely are not ashamed of reading Zimmerman." At the same moment he remarked that the volume had been turned the wrong way towards her; "but," added he, as his quick eye caught this, "the book has been only a pretence;" he was just about to rally her on the position of the volume; his eye rested on the trace which a burning tear had left upon the page. "Letitia," he said, tenderly, "what is the matter? I do not like to find you here alone, and crying. Letitia," he continued, and the epithet

“dear” came involuntarily to his lips—“Letitia, dear, have you any reason to weep?”

She had risen to go away, but he followed her; he drew her arm within his, and led her back to the seat which she had left. She permitted him to do so quietly; she dashed away the long flaxen locks which had fallen across her eyes, and looked up to the blue sky which they could see above the beech trees in the break of some large white clouds.

“Tell me,” he continued, “tell me what it is that frets you?”

“Nothing, Edmund,” she answered, “nothing that concerns anyone but myself.”

She looked full at him—Edmund caught her hand—he was moved—he felt grieved that she seemed unhappy—he thought not of what he said, as his answer expressed the genuine emotions of his soul.

“Letitia, it concerns me—everything that affects your happiness—your happiness is dearer to me than my own.” He had not intended this as a declaration of love; he never thought of the import his words bore, until he marked the deepening flush upon her cheek, and felt her

gentle struggles to withdraw her hand. But his soul was now on fire; the ice that had so long bound his lips was thawed in the words that passed them, and he poured into her ear a tide of passionate protestations, such as, an hour before, he would have given worlds to be able to make.

When I arrived for dinner at Woodbine Cottage that day, I found all Mrs. Jephson's anxieties at an end — Edward Connor was formally received as the accepted suitor for Letitia's hand.

Edmund was now quite happy. That evening the young people were sent by my aunt to walk up the mountain, and breathe the fresh air. Caroline and I were, of course, companions; and Edmund and Letitia contrived to separate themselves from us as widely as possible: they seemed too earnestly engaged in their conversation to heed the sarcasms of Caroline, who, every now and then, used to stop and upbraid them with the slowness of their pace. During that walk they pledged themselves to each other, and arranged their plans. As soon as Edmund obtained his degree they were to be married.

Edmund was now at the close of his junior sophister year: he was a fellow commoner, and could obtain his degree in the July following—and in that month they were to repeat before the altar those vows which that evening they secretly made to each other under the canopy of heaven, and with the wild rocks and heather of the mountains around them.

This arrangement was understood and assented to by all parties, and I now began to think that Edmund would be very happy with Letitia. She seemed really to love him, and he returned her affection with interest. He had altogether given over whatever habits of gaming he had formed, and everything seemed to promise that he would become a happy and a useful man.

Mrs. Jephson had a sister some years older than herself, who had never married, and had all her life been hoarding up money. Letitia was her namesake and godchild: and at first my aunt had supposed that she might calculate on something handsome at her death. Latterly, however, the old tabby had taken very little notice of her godchild. For the first time, the

preceding Christmas had not brought the customary gift for "her little namesake, Letitia." The reason for this was supposed to be, that she had fallen in love with a penniless young officer who was quartered in Cork, near to which city old Miss Collins lived. Her inamorato had since been, however, unfortunately killed in a duel. Miss Collins put on mourning; and a letter, duly written on black-edged paper, and sealed with black wax, arrived at Woodbine Cottage, to her dear sister, giving a most feeling account of her distressing state of mind, and requesting that her little namesake might be permitted to visit her. It was one of those pieces of affectation by which she attempted to disguise, even to herself, the progress of years, to talk of her nieces as if they were children—"she would banish her bad spirits by her childish prattle." This letter vexed Letitia, and amused us all. Poor Letitia was quite mortified at the idea of being sent to Cork, to talk innocent prattle to a cross old maid; but this, however, was a thing not to be thrown away. Miss Collins had money to leave, and it was settled that Letitia was to go.

Even Edmund's entreaties were of no avail. He protested to Letitia that all her aunt could leave her would not pay him for the misery her absence would cause. Mrs. Jephson remarked, upon this being repeated to her, "that that was all very fine talk, but love would not last as long as money—and if he got his own way now, many a day, when they were married and had a parcel of children, he would wish Letitia had gone to see her rich old aunt." Perhaps she was right in this prediction—but we shall see the sequel.

Edmund was miserable at the idea of a separation—he talked of following her to Cork, that he might be near her—but then he must pass his October examination, or lose his year—and this would but defer the consummation of his happiness—he really seemed like some one distracted: he cursed money and rich old aunts at least twenty times a day; but this, as might be supposed, did not mend the matter much. The time, too, came when Letitia must go—and, after many vows and protestations of mutual fidelity, and promises to write often, they were compelled to part. I confess I had a melancholy

feeling the last few days that I saw them together.

Letitia, however, did go, and Edmund was left to solitude for two months. For the first two or three days after her departure he attempted to apply himself to his books—the fact was, that it was high time for him to prepare for his examination. He was gloomy and fretful—he did not seem satisfied with the arrangement that had been made. He spent much of his mornings in walking round the college park, and his evenings in pacing in the colonnade under the library. He was not one, however, who had strength of mind to bear long with gloomy thoughts—he sought excitement to banish them; and just at this inauspicious moment he became again intimate with Wilson. Under the circumstances, it needed but little of the address which that wily intriguer could have employed to draw the victim back into those snares from which he had apparently escaped. Very soon after Letitia's departure, business called me to the neighbourhood of Bristol, where I remained until the middle of November. The day before I left Dublin, I had a long conversa-

tion with Edmund. I found from him that he had all summer neglected his reading; in fact, I deemed it right to tell him that he must be diligent in his studies for the ensuing month, if he wished to insure his passing the examination. He laughed at my caution—indeed, I myself thought it almost superfluous. It was very easy for fellow-commoners to pass—indeed, they themselves appeared to consider it as etiquette that they should not be expected to be prepared. Some of the examiners, who had the ambition of being considered peculiarly gentlemanly, appeared willing enough to concede to them this very flattering privilege; but it sometimes happened that they met with one more stern and unyielding, who put in a practical, and, to the object of it, rather a disagreeable protest against the doctrine, that wealth should be considered as an excuse for ignorance. I left Edmund endeavouring to while away his loneliness by a division of his time between writing love sonnets and studying astronomy. The day I went away, I found Wilson in his room; I could not help thinking it an evil omen. Edmund had promised me to write, but I heard nothing from him

during my absence. I returned home about the middle of November; it was early in the morning that I reached college; I was passing through the streets before the lamps were put out; it was a rainy, raw morning; the dying lamps were flickering half extinguished in the fitful gusts that rose, and then swept by. I had my cloak wrapped close round, and was walking on, buried in my own meditations, when I was startled by seeing two well-known figures, just before me, coming out of a shop where soda-water was sold; they were Wilson and Edmund. I could not conceive what they could be doing in the streets at such an hour and on such a morning. I walked quick and overtook them. Edmund was startled at seeing me; his face was pale and his eyes red. Wilson, too, had a haggard appearance; both seemed as if after a night's carouse. Wilson had the look of a practised debauchée—Edmund, that of one unused to pass his nights in such a manner. I asked Edmund where he had been, or what he was doing; he looked at me with a stupid and a vacant stare, and I now perceived that he was under the influence of intoxication. Wilson had

evidently been his companion, but had borne better with raking. "Come," said he, "this kind of work does not suit you. You had better make haste home, and go to bed."

Edmund answered that he was well enough, and then relapsed into a species of stupid trance, from which he had roused himself.

"Poor fellow!" said Wilson, to whom I had addressed no observation, but who appeared determined to talk enough for himself and Edmund both. "Poor fellow! he has been in very bad spirits since he lost his examination."

The words came like a thunderbolt upon my ear: they told me the history of the last two months. He had lost his examinations! and now, at seven in the morning, he was staggering through the streets with Wilson!! I needed no more: I felt that he was a ruined man.

Wilson ran on, with a surprising fluency, to give me a full account of the matter.

"He depended upon passing as a fellow commoner; but he got Dr. Dyke, with whom I believe you know there is no respect for velvet gowns and tassels, and he 'stuck' him. I believe

he has more sense than to care for the 'caution,'* but it keeps him another year out of his fortune. Ever since the examination, he has been alternately cursing Dr. Dyke and his father; the one for knowing so little of the world as to expect that a gentleman should know anything; the other for supposing that he could not spend his fortune just as well without a degree as with it."

"Really, Mr. Wilson," I answered, "Mr. Connor must be very much changed since I knew him, or he would hardly act the unamiable part of cursing a good man for doing what I fear was nothing but his duty, and his deceased parent for what certainly seems to have been an act of kindness."

I said this with much bitterness. Wilson did not seem sorry that our arrival at the college gate exempted him from the necessity of replying. He appeared disposed to accompany Edmund to his rooms. I told him that his kindness was superfluous, and that I would see him to bed.

"Oh! no," he answered, "I do not think

* "Caution" is in Dublin the Academic phrase for losing the examination.

you are up to all his rooms as well as I am, as I have been living with him for the last week ; but if by and by you will come over to us, he will be able to welcome you home, and we will have some breakfast."

Wilson living with him ! Alas ! alas ! I felt that he was gone indeed ; but I said nothing. Without even noticing Wilson's invitation, I turned off to my own rooms. I could not but mourn over poor Edmund's fate : he was too manifestly Wilson's dupe and victim. All my hopes that he would have been rescued were dashed to the ground ; and all—all arose from the desire of a little more money prompting my aunt to send away her daughter. It was a just penalty upon the avarice and graspingness that made her indifferent to the feelings of her child ; but was it just that he should be the victim ? God forgive her ! I could not help thinking that the drops of the blood of his soul had been weighed out by Mrs. Jephson as the purchase of gold. I diverted my mind from such thoughts only by recollecting that I still might make an effort to save him. As soon, therefore, as I thought he would have slept off the effect of

the night's debauch, I bent my steps to his chambers.

I was rejoiced to find him alone. Pale, and haggard, and woe-begone, he was sitting at a late and uncomfortable breakfast. He was attempting to swallow a cup of coffee; but, gracious heavens! beside him, on the table, stood a brandy bottle! I was shocked. I felt as a physician who had been summoned to see a patient with some slight ailment, and found about him all the symptoms of death. A brandy bottle on his breakfast table! What is fearful in gaming is the rapidity with which it hurries you down the road to ruin. It is in vice what consumption is in disease—every other vice will be slow in its progress before it brings you, as it were, to the last stage; but not so with gaming—it has a hectic fever that preys on you with the rapidity of flame, and it soon does its work.

I sat down opposite to him almost without saying a word. He was the first to allude to the subject of which both our minds were full.

“Wilson, I believe, has told you all.”

"He has told me too much," said I. "He has told me that he was living with you."

"Ah!" he answered, "you do not know Wilson. He is one of the few friends I have; he is an honest fellow; he has a strong affection for me; but did he tell you that I was cautioned?"

I bowed assent.

"Did he tell you that I have been—that I have been—that I gamble?" he added.

"No! I did not require his information, after what I saw this morning," I replied.

He seemed surprised; he burst into a passionate flood of tears; he cried out, "Did he tell you that I am ruined?" he covered up his face with his hands, and sobbed like a girl.

"Ruined!" I repeated with him.

"Yes, ruined!" he calmly reiterated, rising up with the dignity of one who felt that he knew and could bear the worst.

"Do you mean," I asked, "that you have gambled away all your fortune?"

"No, not all," he answered, with a bitter smile; "but I have heavily involved myself."

It was some time before I could get him to

state anything explicit; he was in a paroxysm of mental fever; he was almost like a madman: he walked up and down his apartment, and repeated the word, "*ruined!* ruined! ruined!"

When he spoke of Letitia, he seemed absolutely frantic.

"Happiness," he cried, "happiness was within my grasp—it was in my grasp, and I flung it from me. For what? For excitement—for damnation—to be the dupe of rogues. All gamblers are rogues. I can blame no one but myself. Men," he added, "complain of the world and of nature; but no, the world is full of happiness, but man creates the misery. I do not know what I am talking of—my nerves are shattered by sitting up all night, night after night—no human frame will stand excitement," and he smote his hand vehemently on his forehead. "Hell fire is in my veins—it is preying on me—consuming me; but I have kindled it myself—it will burn me!"

Thus did he rave until he stopped from pure exhaustion. I had some difficulty in persuading him to state the amount of his obligations. At last I got him calmly to sit down to the dis-

agreeable task of counting up his debts. And what a detail was here; he had been supplied with money by a rich old Jew who lived in ——— Street, but supplied at a tremendous rate of interest; he had in one instance been induced to give a bond for three hundred pounds upon receiving one hundred and fifty. I hinted to him that these extortionary bargains might be broken, but he indignantly rejected the proposal; he had this high feeling of honour that shrunk even from depriving villany of its fraudulent gains. After making the most accurate calculation we could, we reckoned up his debts as amounting to about four thousand pounds—a considerable sum, but yet not one that was anything like the ruin into which he had exaggerated it. When he looked his difficulties full in the face, he seemed surprised to find that it was possible to meet them; he looked again and again at the paper, before he could be convinced that the calculation was correct. “Why,” said he, “this is very odd; Wilson made out, a week ago, that I was ruined, and that my only chance was to retrieve myself by the gambling-table. He is fond, you know, of

a classical allusion, and he said the wound, like that of Telephus, could only be cured by the weapon that inflicted it. I am certain I have lost heaps during the week ; are you sure you have added it right ?”

“ Perfectly ; if you have given me the items right.”

We went over the items again, one by one ; we could, however, detect no mistake, and when he was indeed convinced that he was not ruined —when I pointed out to him how he might easily, having obtained possession of his fortune, pay off all demands, without suffering more than a temporary embarrassment, his joy seemed equal to his former despair ; his eyes, upon which but a little moment before a heavy stupor had hung, lighted up with the fires of gladness ; he grasped my hand in silence ; there was something almost convulsive in the tightness with which he squeezed it.

“ Then I am not ruined !” he said, in a voice stifled by the depths of his emotion.

“ No, Edmund,” said I, “ thank God you are not ; you have embarrassed yourself, but you

are in no difficulties that prudence may not retrieve."

"Thank God!" he cried, with all the fervour of sincere devotion. "Oh, God has been good to me; he watched me when I could not watch myself, or sharpers would have taken my all."

He raised his eyes to heaven, while tears of gratitude chased each other down his pale, but still manly cheeks.

"And my Letitia!" he added, in a voice that seemed to express a feeling divided between gratitude to heaven, and hopes of happiness on earth.

"There is nothing," said I, "to prevent your being happy with her; but, Edmund, remember how nearly you have been to sacrificing both her happiness and your own."

He looked at me steadily for an instant; he went over to his bookcase and took down a book: he then said, earnestly—

"You remember once asking me for a promise that I would never enter a hell; would to God I had given it to you, but now you shall have my oath."

I would have stopped him, but I had not time.

"Here," he said solemnly and slowly, "here,

in the presence of Almighty God, and by this Holy Book, I swear that while I live I never will play at game of chance, or—" he added, after a moment's hesitation, "game of any kind, so help me God!" and he kissed the open Bible, which during this adjuration he had held in his hand.

He looked like one who had flung a load from off his mind; "God give you grace to keep your oath," I fervently prayed.

He then gave me an account of much that had happened in my absence; he told me that to get rid of the intolerable weariness in which his days were passing, he had permitted himself to be tempted by Wilson once more to visit the gambling table; he determined to amuse himself with it as a recreation. "Alas!" said he, "it was like giving blood to the tiger. The fiend that had been lurking in my breast awoke once more in all his terrible fierceness; and I gambled fearfully—terribly. I then was introduced by Wilson to the old Jew in ——— Street, who cashed bills for me, at a tremendous discount, all drawn on me at different intervals. Thus I went on. I knew that I was going as

fast as possible to ruin, but I had not courage to look my real circumstances in the face ; and Wilson, who looked over the state of my affairs, told me I could only retrieve myself by successes at the gambling table ; ha ! ha ! ha !” he laughed wildly at the notion, “ no one ever did that ; it is like exercising for one’s health in a poisoned atmosphere ; but thank God it is all over.”

I asked how could he not see that Wilson had been duping him ? but upon that point he was inaccessible to reason ; he would not even suffer himself to be argued with ; he said Wilson had proved himself his friend, and that he would stake his life on his attachment and good faith. We then spoke of his unfortunate loss of the examination ; this pressed very sore upon his proud spirit. “ It has deferred my marriage ; and what can I tell Letitia ? must—must she know my disgrace, folly, my madness ? for how can I account for the idleness that made me lose my examinations, but by confessing that my nights were passed in gaming, and my days yawned away in the fearful stupefaction that followed the more fearful excitement of the night ?”

Some peculiar ill-fortune appeared to have

attended him in connection with that examination. I have already mentioned that the examiners were not in general too severe in their exactions upon the knowledge of fellow-commoners; and perhaps dependence upon this encouraged Edmund in the absolute idleness which he practised; but, indeed, at the moment his infatuation was such that he plainly made no calculation at all. However, he went in, depending on his general knowledge and his velvet gown to pass, when, to his consternation, he found that one of his examiners was Dr. Dyke; just one of those obstinate men who were so unreasonable as to expect fellow-commoners to know something of their business; and the consequence was that Edmund was "cautioned."

With some hesitation he confessed to me that he had demeaned himself, for so he now termed it, to employ personal solicitations with Dr. Dyke; he represented to him that his attaining his property was contingent on his degree. But it was all in vain; Dr. Dyke simply told him that this was an additional reason for cautioning him—he said that "no one so ignorant of astronomy was fit to manage his own property; and be-

sides, it would in fact be cheating the charity to which his money was going, to let him pass."

The loss of the examination was now irretrievable, and the consequent postponement of his union with Letitia was equally beyond the power of alteration. I advised him to tell her candidly everything concerning the matter—that the woman to whom he was to be united for life was entitled to his confidence. He did not, however, seem to assent to my reasoning, and I left him still undecided how he should act.

That night Wilson and he quarrelled. I could not ascertain from what cause, but I was glad of it; Wilson left his rooms in a passion, and did not return.

Edmund was now comparatively happy and contented. The period of Letitia's return was coming near; there seemed nothing to fret him except that his three last letters to her had been unanswered—she was, however, well. I thought that the manner of her family towards Edmund was changed.

Mrs. Jephson seemed upon one occasion anxious to put off his inquiries about Letitia; I determined to watch closely for the cause; I soon

gathered, from hints let fall incautiously in my presence, that a very rich baronet in the neighbourhood of Cork had been paying Letitia remarkable attention, and I could perceive that her mother was dazzled by the prospects of a brilliant alliance, and would not have been sorry to have a pretext to break off her engagement with Edmund. My heart trembled for Edmund's happiness. I saw that all depended upon Letitia's constancy, but I thought she loved Edmund well enough to resist, for his sake, the solicitations of her friends. I certainly thought her not writing strange, but this I attributed to the influence, perhaps the surveillance, of her aunt.

It was about ten days after Wilson had left Edmund's rooms, that I was surprised at receiving a visit from him. Wilson had all that easy assurance of manner that passes generally for gentility; and, though I did not show much signs of being glad to see him, he made himself perfectly at home. It was a keen, frosty day, and he drew his chair close to the fire. I could not help remarking both the shabbiness of his dress, and the delicacy of his appearance, had indications of the state both of his pocket and

health. Wilson was generally very fastidious in personal appearance—he was still neat, but his clothes were threadbare; the worn cuffs of his old black coat formed a strange contrast with a large and sparkling brilliant upon his finger—his cheeks were sallow, a large red patch—I can describe the appearance no other way—appeared as if it were a dash of paint upon each, and a hollow cough seemed to come from the very depth of his lungs.

“Mr. O’Brien,” said he, “I am going to take a liberty with you that perhaps our intimacy does not warrant, but it is one you must excuse: my conduct is dictated only by a sense of what is due to a respectable family. I believe you are related to the Jephsons.”

I bowed assent.

“I ought first, perhaps, to premise that what I now say is confidential.”

“Pardon me, Mr. Wilson,” I interrupted; “I make no pledge—I will keep no secrets that honour will not permit—I do not seek any communication from you; if you volunteer one, it must be left to my own feeling whether it is to be confidential.”

He seemed a little thrown off his centre. "I am content to leave it to your own feeling—I am sure I am safe in doing so. And believe me, Mr. O'Brien, that although some people may speak ill of me, if you knew me you would feel convinced I could have no secret that is not honourable to communicate to you."

He uttered these last words with the tone of one who felt that he had been injured by the opinion of the world. I pitied him—I almost felt disposed to trust him.

"I believe," said he, "young Connor is to be married to one of the Jephsons."

I said nothing; he took my silence for assent, and proceeded—"I do not know whether the family are aware that he is a confirmed gambler."

I hardly knew what to say. "He is, in fact, a ruined man; his whole fortune is gone; I am sorry to say I know this from having been too often his companion at the gambling table; but, as I have the deepest respect for your character, although you have often seemed to shun me as if I was infectious—I do not know how you may take my interference—but I thought it right that you should know the real state of

Connor's affairs—you may, of course, act upon my information as you think fit."

I thanked him!! Heaven forgive my hypocrisy—I thanked him!!—I told him I already knew of Edmund's gambling, but added that I trusted he was now reclaimed.

"Reclaimed!" he repeated with bitterness; "ah, Mr. O'Brien, you have never been a gambler, or you would not speak of anyone being reclaimed; there is a curse about anyone that has ever thrown the dice at a gambling table that cannot be shaken off. Mr. O'Brien," he added passionately, "I know too well the bitterness of that curse, ever to wish a young girl to share it; and share it she will if she marries a gambler."

He bade me politely good morning, and I could not help standing for a moment at the window, to watch him as he went across the courts. He was very much emaciated; I could hear the deep, hollow cough that sounded as if from the tomb, and seemed aggravated by the keen blast of the cutting breeze from which he had not even a great coat to shelter him; I could not help feeling that this was the sign of

his poverty ; and my heart bled for him as he stopped to cough, and literally shivered in the sharp frosty wind.

- I could not understand the interview I had with him ; I knew not whether to attribute it to some cunning, or to the feelings which he had assigned. I determined, for the present, not to mention it to Edmund, but to watch the progress of circumstances.

All went on quietly, and it was within two days of Letitia's return. Edmund's impatience was almost hourly increasing : he could think of nothing, he could talk of nothing, but the delight of meeting her, and once more, in the assurance of her love, forgetting all that he had suffered, and laughing at all that he had feared. He had spent a week in constructing a work-box for her, with his own hands, and he had it just completed. One morning he had just finished the carving of her christian name—he left a blank for the other, and said, laughingly, he would leave that for herself to fill up.

It was, as I said, within two days of the time of Letitia's return ; the Jephsons had some time returned to town ; I got in the morning a note

from my aunt—it was put into my hand just as I was looking at Edmund's arrangement of all his little presents for Letitia; it requested of me to see her immediately, and to come *alone*—the word “alone” was dashed. I made what haste I could; I found my aunt looking pale and agitated. Mr. Jephson was walking up and down the room, apparently in a passion, and Caroline was sitting in a window, evidently in a bad temper.

I was ushered in to meet this family party. “So, here, sir,” exclaimed Mr. Jephson violently: “here is a pretty piece of business, my daughter nearly destroyed—just about to be married to a beggar and a gambler”

My aunt endeavoured to moderate his rage, but, like all weak men, he was violent. “D——n the rascal!” he repeated two or three times, vehemently: and when he had apparently appeased himself by thus charitably consigning poor Edmund to the evil one, he looked out of one of the windows, and remained silent.

“Stevenson, my dear,” said my aunt (it was one of her foibles to call me by my second name, which she fancied a genteel one), “Ste-

venson, my dear—now that your uncle will let me speak—we have been all terribly annoyed this morning : your uncle has been told by an old friend, that Mr. Connor spends all his time in gambling, and we have sent for you to know about it ; but, indeed, our information is too certain to be doubted ; and you know, my dear,” she added, “it would be a sad thing if poor Letitia was married to a gambler.”

I could not deny part of the information. I explained the real state of Edmund’s affairs, and I pleaded his cause as well as I could. I told of his oath—I told the exact amount of his embarrassments—but all would not do. Mr. Jephson grew more and more violent. “No daughter of mine shall ever marry a gambler. No ! no ! d——n the rascal !” he began again ; indeed this imprecation seemed his safety-valve. Mrs. Jephson was less violent, but equally determined. She said she expected I would myself have told them of what I knew. “Indeed, Stevenson,” said she, “your uncle and I have been disappointed in your conduct.”

I felt the colour rush to my cheek at this reproach, which was apparently too well merited.

Mr. Jephson said nothing, but contented himself with his usual imprecation. I almost thought in his heart he meant to apply it to me.

The end was, that I was commissioned to communicate to poor Edmund the wishes of the family, that he should discontinue his visits at the house. As a last resource, I entreated that this determination might be postponed until the arrival of Letitia; that the person most interested might have a voice in the council. This proposal was, however, indignantly rejected by the whole party.

"Stevenson," said my aunt, "I believe you have lost your senses. Why should the poor girl be fretted about such things? It is much better she should find it all settled when she comes; there is no use in annoying her about it."

"No! no!" cried my uncle, passionately. "He shall never cross my doors again—d——n the rascal!" and having got upon this chime, he repeated it two or three times; this forming, indeed, the regular termination of all his bursts of virtuous indignation.

"Indeed, then," said Caroline, "if Letitia

was here, I suspect she would have no great objection to be off. I think Sir Harry Disney has made some impression upon her. A title and four thousand a year is not to be slighted."

"Stop your nonsense, girl," cried my uncle, "I'll settle the matter;" and he violently rung the bell, his usual finale of curses succeeding.

"John," he cried to the servant who made his appearance, "do you hear? If Mr. Connor calls here, tell him—tell him—to be damned," he added, as if he were at a loss for words.

"Very well, sir," said John, manifesting not the slightest astonishment at such a strange message.

"Stop, John," cried my aunt authoritatively. "Never mind your master. If Mr. Connor calls here—now mind what I say to you—tell him that none of the family are at home; you will not forget, John—that none of the family are at home."

"Yes, ma'am," said John, with just as much indifference as he had before received the more extraordinary commands of his master.

I saw that I could do nothing. I almost rushed from the house. I still had hopes that

when Letitia would come, and when the first burst of passion was over, all might be arranged. I knew that Mr. Jephson, although a weak, was a good-hearted man. I knew that he would not sacrifice his daughter's happiness. I felt that if Letitia was constant—and, notwithstanding Caroline's hint, I could scarcely doubt this—all would be right. I thought it possible my aunt might have some mercenary views, and I dreaded her influence over her husband ; but still I trusted that all would be well. But how was I to tell Edmund—how was I to blight the hopes of that fond and confiding heart—hopes that I had only that morning seen so affectionately expressed in all the little attentions that he had been so industriously preparing ? I shrank from the task ; I hardly knew what I was doing ; I walked away in a different direction ; I got upon the banks of the canal, and I almost mechanically followed its course. I cursed in my heart the selfishness of the world. I traced back all the misery that seemed thus to have blackened the bright hopes of a young and happy couple, like the thunder-storm that bursts upon the noon of a cloudless morning, to the avarice

that prompted Letitia's visit to Cork. Bitterly did I inveigh against wealth—against legacy-hunting, and often did I repeat, for the first time, with a full perception of their meaning, the truly inspired words of the Apostle—"The love of money is the root of all evil."

At last I thought that while I was thus giving way to vain and useless thoughts, Edmund might be exposed to the humiliation of being denied admittance to the house where he had long been received as an inmate of the family. I hurried back. I found him in his rooms, and his wild and agitated demeanour told me that I was too late. He had called at the house, and from John he had heard that he had orders to deny the family to him. John told him confidentially that his master was in a great passion, and that I had been there, but beyond that he knew nothing.

I endeavoured to calm his mind, I told him all I knew: but when he found that they knew of his gambling, he burst into passionate exclamations with a frenzy that startled me.

"Yes, I guessed as much—I now am ruined—my soul is ruined—I hung all my hopes on

CHAPTER I.—THE BILLIARD TABLE. 111

her, and I am now adrift—my anchor is gone, and the winds and waves may take me to damnation !”

I told him that he need not despair. “If,” said I, “Letitia is constant all will be well.”

“If!” he cried. “I will stake my life—ten thousand lives upon her constancy; and yet, will she believe that I loved her? will she believe that if I loved her I would thus madly fling away her happiness? Oh! can she believe it? I did not—God knows I did not—think that I was trifling with her happiness. A man may stake his own, but how—how could I stake hers?”

At last I succeeded in pacifying him; and he began to think of the means by which he might remedy the evil; he sat down, and he wrote a long letter to Mr. Jephson, which he immediately sent by his servant; he then began to write one to Letitia, which I was to convey; but he flung half-a-dozen commencements in the fire, and was not able to please himself. Next morning brought him a parcel from the Jephsons; the direction was in my aunt’s hand; it was his own letter opened, but marked on the outside

“unread;” the word was also in my aunt’s handwriting.

Letitia came, and the next morning I paid a visit at the Jephsons. Letitia seemed pale. I knew not whether to attribute it to the fatigue of her journey, or to agitation. I sat some time; my aunt appeared to watch me with a very jealous eye, and seemed to keep the strictest “surveillance” over all my actions. Not a word was spoken by any one on the subject that filled all our minds; and, after having sat out a long visit, which evidently was as irksome to my relatives as to myself, I took my leave.

That evening Edmund completed his letter to Letitia; he entrusted it to my care, and next day I called again. I did not, however, see Letitia; I could not draw a word from either Caroline or my aunt, on the subject of which my heart was full. They told me Letitia was not well after travelling, and was confined to her room.

That evening I was sitting with Edmund. We both augured well from Letitia’s confinement to her room.

“My poor angel!” said he; “they are, per-

haps, trying to force her to forget me—perhaps they have misrepresented me to her. Oh,” he exclaimed, bitterly, “what misery have I caused. I told you,” he resumed, “I told you she would be true to me. Oh, there was nothing but truth, and love, and purity in her. Oh, Edward, I am not worthy of it.”

His rhapsody was disturbed by a knock at the door. A messenger brought a parcel: it was directed in Letitia’s hand. Edmund’s heart beat violently. He turned deadly pale. He tore open the paper. It contained all his own little presents, which he had given her at different times—all returned, and by herself.

He seemed stupefied. He said nothing for some minutes. He tore the paper that contained the parcel into pieces. He flung the fragments violently on the floor, and stamped, and gnashed his teeth.

“Oh, then, she, too, has forsaken me; she is false—is it not false as hell? ay, that is the word—false as hell!”

He stopped. He ran and gathered up the fragments of the paper his violence had torn. He put them together, and gazed upon the

writing, as if to be sure that it was hers. He kissed the words over and over, and then placed the torn pieces carefully in his desk.

He stopped a moment. He asked me for the letter which I had. I gave it to him. He snatched up his hat, and hurried from the room.

I followed him. I knew not to what his passion might lead him. He had, however, rushed far across the courts. It was a blustery, rainy night. I met him quickly returning. I stopped him, and said, "Edmund, think of what you are about. Do nothing foolish."

"No," said he, calmly, "I will not; but I was forgetting the messenger that will take this letter to Letitia's hands."

I did not know what he meant. I could hardly keep up with his quick step, as he rushed back to his rooms. He took up his purse, which he had left lying on the table, and, shaking it, he said, with a bitter smile, "This will find its way where friendship could not. Letitia's maid will be a better messenger than you."

He rushed out again; and, now that I perceived that his plans were rational, I did not

care to follow him ; indeed, I did not wish to be found an accessory to the bribing of my aunt's servants ; and, as I was not sure but he might be detected, and I could possibly give him no assistance, I thought it more prudent to stay quietly at home.

He soon returned to me. He had had an interview with Letitia's maid, whom he had bribed to carry the letter to her mistress. The maid had told him that one night, when Letitia was going to bed, she had burst out crying ; but that every other night she seemed just as usual ; but Mrs. Jephson had mostly come into her room.

To his mind the fact of her crying one night was sufficient evidence of her constancy. He was in high spirits. What were the contents of his letter he would not tell me. Next day, however, cast him down again. As soon as it was dark, he went to receive the answer from the maid. It was his own letter returned. Miss Letitia had read it over ; she began to cry, and scolded her maid for bringing her such a letter. She was at first going to tell her mother ; but, as this would have cost the girl

her place, she gave her back the letter, having first sealed it again, and told her to give it back where she got it.

"And did she ask nothing more about it?" said Edmund eagerly.

"No!" replied Barbara; "but, after she went to bed, she sobbed and cried, and in the morning her pillow was all marked with her tears."

"I hear some talk," added Barbara, "about her going to be married to a great gentleman from Cork: he came to the house to-day."

This was enough for Edmund: he flew back to me in a state bordering upon distraction. Next day he intreated of me to go to the house and find all out. I complied with his request, and, with a beating heart, I knocked next morning at the Jephsons' hall-door.

I found my aunt sitting alone.

"Well, Stevenson, my dear," she said, after some common-place conversation, "you may wish me joy."

"Of what, ma'am?" I asked.

"Both the girls, my dear, are to be married on one day."

"Married!" I cried, in a voice of astonishment that I could not repress.

"Yes," she answered. "I suppose you may guess who Caroline's husband is to be." I guessed it was the madman. "And Letitia," she continued, "she is making a match that pleases us all very well: she is to be married to a Sir Harry Disney, a very nice gentleman, who took a fancy to her at her aunt's—one of the first families in the county Cork. A title and four thousand a year is beyond what Letitia had a right to expect; but she certainly is a nice girl, is not she, Stevenson?"

"And has Letitia consented to this?" I asked, without taking any notice of her concluding question.

"Consented, my dear—what do you mean? Surely the girl is no fool, to refuse such an offer."

"Does she forget Edmund Connor?" I cried in a burst of passion.

"Faugh!" said my aunt with a sneer; "if you wish for my favour, Stevenson, never mention that odious fellow's name. I trust," added she, turning up her eyes, "I trust Letitia feels

the gratitude that we all owe to Providence for having saved her from ruin."

"Ruin!" said I in a passion: "there was no ruin in the case. Aunt," I added, "remember that Letitia solemnly pledged herself to Edmund. Edmund is not ruined; you have not that excuse, Edmund is not ruined. Letitia is his wife."

"Oh, Stevenson, my dear, these are the romantic notions of a man of genius. You men of genius are not fit for the world. I assure you Letitia forgets her girlish flirtation already. Come! you will like to have your cousin Lady Disney, and you will spend your vacations at Disney Hall. I am sure you will be as great a favourite with him as you are already with Letitia. Sir Harry is very fond of young men of talent. But I must leave you; the girls are busy choosing their wedding dresses, and I must go help them."

"Romantic notions!—men of genius!—girlish flirtation!" I repeated after her. "And these are the epithets by which you gloss over a false, a wicked, and undisguised violation of a most solemn compact."

As I passed down stairs I heard Letitia's

voice, in the gay tones of merriment. She seemed to be coming down after me; but I could not wait to see her: I would as soon have seen the devil. I hated her; I hated all woman-kind. As I left the house, I banged the great hall-door after me with a vehemence that made the whole house shake.

But how shall I describe Edmund's feelings—his conduct when I went and communicated to him what I had heard? He would not believe me; he said that I was joking with him—that I was trying his temper: he told me I "lied"—this was the very word he used; then he cried out, "Are you sure you heard her voice, as you describe? I believe everything but that; but I will not believe this; no, Letitia, it's a lie—a foul lie."

He said his head was burning. I persuaded him to come out into the open air. We walked on towards the country: we mechanically took the road that led to Rathfarnham. Everything reminded Edmund of past days: but it is in vain to attempt to recall all the wild things he said; who could trace all the passionate ravings of disappointed love?

We were returning near town, when we perceived a gentleman and lady driving alone in a gig. Gracious Heaven! it was Letitia and—we presumed Sir Harry Disney. The gentleman was altogether occupied with his companion; he was teaching her to drive: she had the reins in her hand and he was guiding her in the use of them. She seemed particularly gay: we could hear her laughing as she passed near us. She saluted me, but took no notice of Edmund.

It seemed, as he told me again, as if a cold arrow of ice had been shot through his heart. He stopped, and looked after them, as the gig whirled merrily along. "Go," he cried; "go, and the curse of a broken vow be with you!"

I had never heard him speak with such bitterness before. His lip was curled, and his features wore an expression of malice that was almost frightful. He quoted the words of an old Scotch song, which he had often repeated to Letitia in raillery—

"Women

Would marry Old Nick, if he kept them aye braw."

He spoke not another word until we reached College. He stopped at the door of his rooms;

his hand was on the latch—"Edward," he cried, "I have said nothing since I saw *that*; but there has been a struggle. I am cool; I will be no more passionate—no! an icy arrow has gone through my heart; it has frozen up all the feelings of humanity. I care now for no one; she has made me what I am. You see I am cool. I can hate my species. Come here," he cried, "and see if I am not cool."

He brought out from an inside room all the presents he had intended for her. He stamped upon the work-box, and smashed it into a thousand pieces: he put the pieces into the fire. He searched drawer after drawer, and each memento of hers that he discovered he flung into the flames. At last he took a lock of bright hair—it was Letitia's: it was bound by a bit of blue ribbon.

He hesitated for a moment; but he flung this, too, into the fire, and as he did, he muttered, "Damn her! damn her!" with all the bitterness of fiendish hate.

He then sat down. I never saw such a picture of intense mental suffering as his countenance presented.

"Don't you think," he said, "I had a good riddance of her? My being a gambler was all a pretence: it was the title. Ah! had Sir Henry been a gambler—I am glad I am rid of such a devil."

I acquiesced in the sentiment far more cordially than he uttered it.

"Poor Wilson," he said, "would be very sorry for this. I wish I had not quarrelled with him."

I do not know whether I was right, but I could not help telling him of the interview I had with Wilson. He started. "Ah," he cried, "this clears the mystery. I know it now. All are liars—scoundrels—men and women all—friends and lovers—all scoundrels—hypocrites—fiends."

His fist was clenched. "Come," said he, "I'll sound this. Come—I'll find it out: he, too, is false. Wait here. I have it all. Money again," and he took out the purse, "money will get their secrets, even from a groom porter. Gracious Heaven! what a dupe I have been!"

He begged of me to wait till he came back, and rushed from the room. After some time he returned. "You were right," he cried: "Wilson is a rascal. There were three of them;

you remember me telling you of Williams, who vowed vengeance against me : he, Wilson, and another, thought if I married they would lose the rest of my fortune—that I would be reclaimed ; and they told her friends I gambled.”

I asked him if he was certain of all this. He assured me that he was. “ Williams I do not mind ; he gave me warning ; but Wilson, the treacherous ruffian ! my friend !—but he is dying—I have tracked him to his den—oh, there is another story—he is dying in a garret, and nobody goes near him but bailiffs, and one poor unfortunate girl, whom Wilson seduced from her friends, and then left on the world ; she is with him, and has for weeks been supporting him ; but I have tracked him to his den : he is dying ; but I would not for worlds he should die and think that I have not found him out.”

That evening he insisted on my accompanying him to Wilson’s garret. I was unwilling to go, but I could not resist his solemn adjurations. “ You are the only human being from whom I will ever ask a favour,” he said. I yielded, partly to his entreaties, and partly to my desire to prevent him doing anything desperate. It was

now within a few days of Christmas; the December night closed in, dark, cold, and dreary; a cold piercing wind was drifting the thin showers of snow, the flakes of which were falling, not even in the softness of a continuous fall, but coming few and sharp through the keen frosty air. Edmund took me out with him as soon as it was dark. I wrapped myself up warm from the inclemency of the night; but no persuasion could induce him even to put on a great coat.

"Ah, no!" he said; "if the cold night cools the fever of my veins, it will do well."

Edmund led me through some nasty streets, until we came to a long dismal alley called Drury Lane. It was a vile and filthy place, running off the worst end of Exchequer Street. The hard frost had congealed the masses of dirt which almost choked the passage, and the centre of the narrow street was a heap of frozen filth. But our progress was constantly interrupted by the jostling of some wretched-looking man, or still more wretched-looking woman, who seemed to think even the open air, cold and piercing as it was, less wretched than the destitution of their own miserable abodes.

Most of the houses had no doors, and that which should have been the hall, seemed a foul and filthy passage that led backward to dens where human beings dragged on their miserable existence of infamy and vice. Occasionally a hideous scream, or a still more hideous laugh, burst from one of those dark passages, and then some male or female would rush out with some fearful imprecation. Many were the expressions of envy uttered by some shivering wretches at the warm habiliments in which I was arrayed. Some of the houses had shops, and from all the upper windows long poles projected, upon which were hung to dry a collection of nasty rags. Such was the place in which we came to seek a man who had been a scholar and a gentleman. Edmund at last dived into one of those dismal and doorless passages of which I have spoken. He went on fearlessly. I caught his hand and followed him into darkness in which I could distinguish nothing. At the termination, however, of the passage, I found myself ascending a flight of stairs, and the voice of men and women, and the gleaming of candles, showed me that I was in an inhabited house. Edmund went up another

flight of stairs, and then another. With difficulty, and, I believe, not without danger, we made our way up the last flight, which brought us to the top of this wretched abode. Several times my foot was caught in large holes. A narrow landing-place scarcely separated the top stair from the door that seemed to open on an apartment, a door out of which one or two panels had been knocked. A window was close to us, but not a pane apparently remained whole; some of the places of the shattered panes had been supplied with hay, but through others of them the cold snow was drifting on my cheek.

Through the broken panels of the door we could see a table, upon which stood a teapot and some medicine phials, with a wooden candlestick, from which there gleamed the indistinct light of a farthing candle; and yet it seemed as if the miserable occupant had been obliged to husband even this; for the wick on it was so long as almost to obscure the light; a female form passed across the table, and her voice had that low murmur of anxiety that seemed to mark the attendant upon the sick.

Edmund did not stand upon ceremony; he

rudely pushed open the door : it had been fastened on the inside ; but the weak fastening gave way against the vigorous push with which he assailed it ; and when that door burst open, what a scene presented itself to our view ! It was a large and wretched garret ; the unplastered slates admitted the snow through the crevices, and the windows had little other protection than what was derived from the hay and straw with which they were stuffed. At one end of this garret there was a fireplace ; a few cinders almost extinguished, barely looked red upon the grateless hearth ; and close to these cinders, so close as literally to be spread in the ashes, was a miserable pallet, upon which we could barely distinguish an emaciated form. The table I have already described. The female, who seemed almost the only living thing in the solitude—for what lay upon the pallet was more like death than life—was young, and, even amid all the misery that surrounded her, was handsome ; her scanty stock of clothing hardly supplied the wants of decency, and even with all her care to make the handkerchief meet, its scanty dimensions exposed a bosom of the most delicate

whiteness ; her long black hair, which hung down neglected, was almost the only covering of her shoulders and neck. She screamed at the opening of the door ; she let fall a cup into which she had been filling some tea, and ran towards the pallet as if to defend him who lay upon it. The wretched man seemed just to have strength to raise himself upon his elbow, and in the death-like features which were then protruded from the blankets I recognised the remnant of Wilson. "Mary," said he, "be quiet;" and there seemed a harshness in the tone with which he addressed her. "It is kind of you gentlemen to come to see me here."

"You will not take him," she cried out in violent emotion, and looking entreatingly at us—"you will not take him ; could he be worse in a gaol?"

"Quiet, you fool!" said he in a harsher tone. The poor girl obeyed, and sat down upon the pallet.

"Wilson," said Edmund, "I am sorry to see you here ; but listen to me—I have found you out—you have not deceived me."

"I never tried," he answered, with an energy that seemed unaccountable.

"Yes, Wilson, you did ; you have ruined me, while you professed yourself my friend."

"No," said Wilson, "you have ruined yourself; and if," said he, "you have come to *my* garret (he laid a bitter emphasis on the word *my*) but to upbraid me in my misery, leave my house, sir—begone—I will soon be well, and then (and he clenched his fist in a passion) I shall ask satisfaction for this intrusion."

"Don't talk so loud, Thomas," said the poor girl in agony ; "the doctor said it would kill you. Oh !" she added, "you have destroyed me ; but don't leave me now a bitter Christmas !"

"Silence, girl !" cried the sick man, with a voice raised to a feeble and attenuated scream. "Begone, wretches !—begone !" and he turned to us with a fierceness that his death-like appearance made appalling.

I pulled Edmund to come away ; but his passion was roused.

"Have you not betrayed me ? have you not ruined me ? Yes—you have the blood of my

soul upon your head—you have—it is a curse upon you upon that bed !”

The sick man shuddered ; he screamed convulsively ; he no more shook his fist in defiance ; it was clenched, but with a spasm.

“ Oh ! you will murder him. Leave us—leave us alone ; we were happy—yes, we were happy here ; you will kill him ; the doctor desired him not to talk. Oh ! my God ! what will I do ?”

Just then the sound of wild laughter came from the room below. It had a fearful effect. Wilson started up.

“ Ah ! there they are—they are laughing. Mary, where is your father ? He cursed me. Did you curse me, Mary ?”

“ No ! no !” cried the poor thing—and she stooped down to kiss his pale and worn cheeks —“ no, I never cursed you—it was not in my heart to curse you, though you left me to starve in the streets !—no, I never cursed you, not even when the baby—” she did not finish the sentence.

Her words were daggers to the dying man ; for dying it was plain he was. He started from

his pillow—he shook convulsively the arm of the devoted creature who had watched by him.

“Did it die?—and what are you here for? Go—begone—the devils will come—they will nurse it—ay, they will warm it—ah! ah! ah!”

“Thomas, love,” she cried, “you will hurt yourself. Oh! but this is a black Christmas to me! Oh! what is all that ever came over me, if I lose you now! I have been glad almost to find you here. When you were well, you did not care for me; but we were happy here. Oh! keep yourself quiet.”

Her words fell unheeded on his ears; his eyes were glazed over with a thick film. She took up his hand—it was cold. She attempted to warm it with her breath. I advanced forward to offer her money to procure any comforts that Wilson might require. I put a guinea into her hand. Her eye flashed with delight.

“I can get wine; the last bottle is just finished; he should have had another as I got the last; but you do not know what this has saved me from;” and as she spoke, a deep crimson flush passed hot and burning over her cheek.

Another rude burst of merriment from the room below started the sick man from the sleep in which he lay.

"Ah! there they are laughing again—they will have me—they are there—look at him;" and he pointed his long, emaciated finger at Edmund, who stood with his arms folded at the foot of his pallet.

"Wilson," cried Edmund, "Wilson, it is I; I forgive you. What can I do for you? Can I help you?"

The finger still pointed the same as ever, and the glazed eye was fixed in an immovable stare.

"He is a friend," I whispered. "We are all friends."

"He is a friend!" he screamed. "He! he! he!" and his eye peered along, as if watching the movements of some unseen beings. "Look there! there! the black man behind Connor. Oh! save—save—save me!"

I looked in the direction he pointed. Edmund had turned deadly pale, and staggered against the wall. I fancied I saw the formless figure of something black in undefined outline behind him. There was something terrible in the

thought. I was startled by another sound from the dying man. His hand was now clutching the blankets, and his voice had sunk to a gurgling rattle.

“Give me your hand—Ma—Mary; it died; it sta—starved: that was strange.”

The poor girl caught his cold and clammy hand, and tried to raise it to her lips; but one wild hiccup, something between a hiccup and a scream, broke from him.

“There, there—ay, he has it; it is a skeleton; I can count its little ribs. Oh! he is dancing it; it is—see, it is a dice-box!”

His eyes fixed upon the unseen object. For some minutes a quivering shudder ran through all his frame; his hand now feebly clutched the blankets: another hiccup, and he was silent for ever. There was something terrible to see the last agonies of that departing spirit in the dismal place that was the scene of them. The wind was whistling through the crevices of the roof, and the very ashes were blown once or twice off the grate by a gust; the paneless casement rattled to the bitter blast; and still there were rising from beneath us the sound alternately of

altercation and of merriment, that might well have seemed, to the confused senses of the dying man, the voices of fiends. I could hardly shake off the impression myself. I advanced forward after a moment's pause. He was indeed dead; the finger was still protruded in the attitude of pointing to the terrible phantom that had flitted before his dying eye; his eyes, which were swelled to a most unnatural size, were bursting from their sockets; and his under-jaw had fallen down in all the lankness of emaciation, and left his livid tongue protruding between his teeth.

The poor girl, the victim of his days of strength, the only tender of his days of sickness and misery, was looking earnestly in his face, as if to ascertain whether he was gone. She breathed upon him, as if to warm the cold cheek from which the vital heat had fled for ever. At last the consciousness seemed to burst upon her that he was dead. She looked round with the look of agony and despair; but it was a stern and a changeless look. Not a tear, not a word gave vent to the sufferings of her heart. She laid down her head beside that of the corpse. Her long, black hair fell over the face

of the dead man. She threw her arms round the stiffening form, and then she sobbed as if her heart would break.

I leaned over her, to close the eyes which were hideously staring. She started—she pushed away my hand—she kissed his livid lips. It was terrible to see her, as it were, fondling with the corpse. “No, Thomas!” she said: “I will close your eyes; they shall not rob me of that, shall they, dear? No, you will not let them:” and once more she kissed the dead man’s lips. Her hand gently passed down the eyelids, which were already stiffening. But when she had done this, it seemed as if now, indeed, she felt that she was parted from him, and she burst into a wild and convulsive agony of grief.

Our attention was caught by the gentle sound of footsteps, and a tall, gloomy female figure entered the room—a woman, whose circumstances were not, apparently, more comfortable than the state of those she came to visit, seemed to have been brought by this last burst of grief to the apartment.

She seemed, poor woman, to be touched by the scene of sorrow which she witnessed.

"Poor thing! poor thing!" she said with tenderness. "Mrs. Smith, honey, is he dead?"

"He is, he is dead," shrieked the miserable object whom she called Mrs. Smith. "Oh! Mrs. Mulvany, my heart is broke;" and she wrung her hands, and flung herself on the corpse.

"Oh, sir," said Mrs. Mulvany, turning to me, "it's a sorrowful six weeks she has had nursing him. He lay, at first, down in one of the under rooms; but, poor body, she could not pay the rent, and the landlord was going to turn them into the street, but I persuaded him to put him up here to die, and here this poor thing has never left him night or day, but when she went to buy their bit of victuals, when she had money for that same; and here she has stayed in this cold garret, where one would think she would be frozen to death. Her great wish was to eat a Christmas dinner with him. Poor thing, it was a fancy she took, and at the same time, God help them, they had not as much as would buy it for them. But he is gone now. Mrs. Smith, honey," she continued, going over to the girl, who still lay upon the corpse, "Mrs.

Smith, honey, there is no use in your lying there; you can't bring him back to you. God and the Blessed Virgin rest his soul; he'll be rewarded now for all his sufferings on earth."

She lay heedless of her consolations; her cheek pressed close to the livid face of the corpse, and all her senses apparently absorbed in contemplating that pale and distorted visage. There was but little use in remaining to witness this heartrending scene. To Mrs. Mulvany, with whose kindness we had been taken, we left some money to provide the comforts that were necessary for the living. Edmund told her that he would see and provide decent burial for the dead. She was astonished. "Well, sir," she said, "I always heard Mr. Smith had decent people; if he is either kith or kin to you—and I ask your pardon for speaking so freely—troth it was a mortal pity you did not find him sooner."

We made no answer to this remark; we hurried from the room. Mrs. Mulvany brought the candle to light us down the narrow staircase; the gust of wind from the window extinguished it: we hastened on in the dark; we

were both anxious to escape the piteous lamentation that still smote upon our ears from the desolate being we had left behind.

Scarce had we regained the street, when Edmund burst into a passionate invective. "Ah, Edward! there is a picture of female constancy! Did you see that? Good God! She, an outcast of the earth! She, at whom the finger of scorn would point! She, upon whose brow the brand of infamy is stamped! She came to share the cheerless garret of the man who had heartlessly betrayed her—she is mourning over his corpse,—and she! ay, she! the child of fortune—she has forgotten her vow—she has sold herself, her oath, for a title—a bauble; and yet, the wretch! were that girl we have just left to pass by her, she would fancy herself contaminated by her presence! Edward, we have much to learn; how false is the judgment that is passed by the world—by society. Tell me, tell me, which is best? Upon which will God look most favourably—on that poor Mary, with all her faults, or on the proud and haughty Lady Disney? She sold herself for gold. What more could be done by the worst of her sex?

and she will mock her God by completing the bargain at his altar."

There was too much truth in what he said. He began again—"And a sinful world will leave that girl to starve—and the proud ones of her sex will scorn her. No! she shall not want. I have a hundred pounds in the world; I will send it to her to-morrow. You seem to wonder at my extravagance. What use is money to me? I will promise," he added bitterly. "I will promise the same sum every time that I find such female constancy!"

He was as good as his word. Next day he gave the poor girl the only hundred pounds he could command: he afterwards took pains to find out her friends, and was the means of restoring her to the home she had forsaken, and from which afterwards she had been driven.

I went with him to see poor Wilson's remains committed to the grave; no one attended the sad ceremony but the paid bearers, ourselves, Mary, and good Mrs. Mulvany, who came to comfort her. We buried him about the time of sunset; the ground was covered with snow, and he was laid in a corner of one of the

crowded churchyards of the city. It was a sad funeral. I cannot attempt to describe poor Mary's wild grief, when the mingled snow and clay hid the black coffin altogether from her eyes : it was a sad sight to us all to see the gold rays of the setting sun, as they broke from the masses of snow-cloud that covered the sky, fall with a gladness that seemed mockery upon the new-piled grave of the young.

I felt my spirits giving way beneath the constant and painful excitement in which my mind was kept. I hoped that all was now over, and that I might have peace which I needed ; but no ! I had still one more scene to go through. Edmund had ascertained the morning, upon which the wedding was to take place ; he had formed the strange resolution of being present. A pew in the gallery of —— church, surrounded by red curtains, afforded us a place from which we could witness the ceremony without being observed ourselves. Edmund made his arrangements with the sexton to admit us early, and then lock the gallery door—it was a private gallery, containing only two pews—so as to prevent the possibility of intrusion. I had received

an invitation to be present, in a more regular manner, at the wedding ; but I declined it, and Edmund forced me to accompany him to this hiding place.

We drew the curtains close round us ; and we had an excellent view of the communion table, where, of course, the ceremony would be performed. We waited some time impatiently for the arrival of the marriage party. I remember, well, the frost had shaped itself into all fantastic forms upon a window which stood close behind us. I occupied myself in mentally tracing plumes and coaches in the shapes which the congelations assumed. Edmund had found a prayer-book, and occupied himself in reading over the solemnization of matrimony.

At last the bridal party came ; there were two brides ; for, as my aunt had told me, her two daughters were both disposed of on this day. Edmund laid down his book, and we both watched the party. Caroline walked boldly and freely up the aisle ; she had just the same toss of her head as usual ; perhaps it was rendered more remarkable by the large plume of white feathers which indicated every toss ; just as you

may have seen cricket players fix little feathers on the wickets, that their slightest movement may be detected. She seemed to have no nervous sensitiveness about the obligations she was going to take upon her, and even when at the altar her manner indicated nothing of embarrassment.

Letitia, on the contrary, was pale and agitated ; to do her justice, she looked beautiful in the robe of white in which matrimonial etiquette had arrayed her. Edmund gazed on her with a steady and unwavering eye. I watched his countenance, and not a variation passed along his features as she moved up the aisle in all her loveliness. A stranger could have detected nothing in the still, quiet gaze of that passionless eye ; there was not even the common admiration that an indifferent spectator might have felt for the beauty of the bride. The brides and grooms took their places at the communion rails ; the clergyman took his station inside ; Edmund turned round, " Is it not a mockery to complete this meretricious bargain here ; listen how they will swear their troth to lies ;" he took up the prayer-book, and began to follow the service.

The clergyman commented to officiate. I have always thought the matrimonial service of the Church of England among the sublimest of her sublime forms. I never felt its sublimity as I did then, when I knew that it was desecrated.

When the priest came to that awful adjuration that charges the persons themselves to disclose, in the sight of Him who knows the secrets of all hearts, all just impediments, Edmund trembled. "Oh, why does he ask her that? she is my wife. I loved her once, I would not have the guilt of that upon her soul." There was silence—the colour came to Edmund's cheek. I thought he was rising to forbid the banns; he changed his position, and leaned his face upon his hand.

The ceremony proceeded; the solemn vows were interchanged; the solemn prayers were said. Oh, what a mockery of that holy form it is to pronounce it over a match of interest! the solemn blessing came next; Edmund leaned upon me for support; the deep solemn voice of the clergyman echoed through the church, as he exclaimed, with all the dignity of his holy office,

"Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder."

Edmund's breathing came quick and short; his eye literally flashed fire; he tried to smile; but his features in the effort wore a fiendish grin. "God hath joined! how dare they mock their God? Say Satan—say money—how dare they mock their God?"

I tremble when I think of what followed; he seemed as if he at once became a fiend; he kneeled down upon his knees; and while the party below were begging or pretending to be begging a blessing upon the union, he knelt and he prayed; he prayed to heaven to curse them.

There was a terrible eloquence in his prayer, which he muttered with an awful distinctness. There was an earnestness in his adjuration, as he prayed to the God of truth to remember her falsehood; as he called on the God of mercy to bear in mind how she had torn and lacerated his heart; and bitterly did he call on the justice of heaven to remember her broken vow, and to make her rue the day she broke it. Sometimes he would pray directly contrary to the prayers that were uttered by the priest.

There was one of his prayers upon which I dread to think. The priest prayed for the blessing of children ; and he—the malice of demons seemed in his soul—and he cursed her. How shall I tell that fearful curse ? he cursed her with the curse of King Lear. The prayer had excited an unmeaning smile in the circle below. Little did they know the terrible imprecations that were rising up from a broken heart. It was a strange thing to see them, all unconscious of the curses that were uttered nigh them. It was stranger to see with what cold listlessness the blessing seemed to be invoked ; and with what terrible earnestness the curse was called down.

The ceremony ended. Edmund rose from his knees ; his features seemed all black and distorted. From the window where we stood, we could see the carriages drive off from the church door ; we watched her entering the carriage of her husband—he gnashed his teeth ; “ Ay, there she is, the legalized wanton ! There ! She has ratified the bargain, and registered the indentures at the altar of God. Lady Disney ! and for that title she would have been the wife of Beelzebub.” Again he gnashed his teeth.

The carriages drove off. He watched them till they were out of sight. He then turned round and said, coolly, "It is all over ; I am content ; but the curse will be with her."

Years have passed away since that morning. Sir Harry Disney turned out a wretched husband, and poor Letitia died—literally died—from the effects of his savage conduct, at a time when she could ill bear it. Edmund from that hour was changed ; he became cold, heartless, and sneering. He went to the bar, where he was for some time doing little ; he was distinguished for nothing but a bitter savageness of disposition, and a mocking at all the feelings of mankind. Once or twice he came forward on the liberal side in politics ; but I must say no more ; my tale has been, perhaps, already too long, and here I may better drop the veil.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—I cannot permit this Chapter to be republished without adverting to a subject which once caused me no little pain.

When this tale was originally published, many appropriations were made of the characters and incidents which had not the slightest foundation in fact. Most of these were calculated only to excite a smile. But

there was one which appeared, and only appeared, to derive some countenance from an accidental confusion of names, and which created feelings of a far different nature.

Even after an interval of nearly thirty years I have a melancholy satisfaction in declaring that not one single incident in this chapter was taken from the history of any one who had not passed from the recollections of College men long before it appeared in print.

But that I fear to revive misrepresentations, which may have long since been forgotten, I would give a more explicit denial to that particular one to which I refer. Those who are still living, and who may have been wounded by a supposition which could never have found belief except in the ingenious malice of an enemy, or the morbid sensitiveness of friends, will now, perhaps, hardly need a disclaimer of an interpretation which every line of the narrative refutes. Yet it is due to truth that it should be made. It is due to my own feelings to express the deep regret with which I found that the confusion to which I have adverted furnished the pretext for insinuations, which, but for knowing that they caused pain, I would have thought too absurd for serious notice. I can only say that I know that they had not the remotest ground in the wishes, intentions, or meaning, either of the writer or of any one responsible for the publication.

If it be true, as was confidently said, that the scene at the wedding in the church was recognized as one which occurred in one of the parish churches of Dublin a very

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few years before the appearance of the story, I can only say that the coincidence is a remarkable one—for most assuredly that scene was NOT the one described in this chapter. But probably such things have often occurred—"There is nothing new under the sun."

"That which hath been, that also must be," and human passion under the same circumstances is not unlikely to find the same expression and prompt to the same acts. But it is singular, if it be true, that this scene was repeated with the most accurate resemblance, even in minute details, by persons of whom the writer had never heard, and on an occasion of which he could not have known. Yet this was positively affirmed by persons of good faith, who professed to be, and must have been well acquainted with the circumstances, and who made this the foundation of a charge against Mr. O'Brien of having revealed the confidences of private life.

It was amusing to contrast with this accusation the criticism which condemned this scene as unnatural and forced—"untrue to nature, and impossible to have occurred."

CHAPTER II.

READING FOR HONOURS—CHARLES D'ALTON.

THERE are those to whose minds the title Reading for Honours will recall associations of pleasantry and mirth. It is not long since you have read under that title the portraiture of a candidate for collegiate fame, the merry recollections of which cannot yet have passed from your mind.*

* This refers to a paper which, under the title of "Reading for Honours," appeared in one of the earliest numbers of the Dublin University. Those who read that paper cannot have forgotten it—to those who have not, no description could convey an idea of the exquisite humour with which it portrayed the conceits and disappointments of the rural candidate for collegiate distinctions on his first arrival at the intended theatre of his future greatness.

Now, it is just for this reason that I have chosen the same title, because I wish to show you that there is a something connected with the reality of "reading for honours," at which you cannot laugh. You imagine, perhaps, that the path of youthful ambition is characterised by nothing that is not mirthful and gay: you are very far mistaken—that path is trod by many a weary step; it is strewn with the bleeding remnants of many a heart that has burst in the effort to be great.

Charles D'Alton was my oldest and my truest friend. I am perhaps excusable if I consecrate the first of my chapters to his memory. I had originally intended to follow the date of the events which I record, but I have given up this arrangement principally that I may devote my first chapter to him to whom my heart still turns with regrets that are equally fond and vain.* Charles and I were contemporaries in college, how long ago it matters not. I shall give no dates to my narrative, and

* This was the first of these chapters in the order of their original publication. It appeared in the Dublin University Magazine in the month of November, 1834.

for this reason, that, as truth may sometimes oblige me to speak of persons who are still living, perhaps not in the most complimentary manner, I desire to give no clue by which my characters may be recognised. There are many who now hold their heads high in society, as worthy, and amiable, and upright men, whom yet I will draw as they really are—selfish, and mean, and heartless, and designing. But I have no wish to take from them the reputation they enjoy ; and, therefore, I will leave no trace by which they may be discovered. It is needless to say that all my names are fictitious ; and it is but justice to add that I shall endeavour, as far as truth will permit, to dispose my incidents so that any attempt at conjecture will, most likely, wander very far from the fact.

It is not probable, reader ! that in narratives of fact I will have occasion to draw upon your credulity, unless when you may, perhaps, be disposed to distrust that truth, which of old is said to be stranger than fiction. Strange to say, I *do* intend to draw upon your imagination. Reversing all the ordinary rules of romance writing, instead of employing that faculty in

myself, I propose that you should exercise yours.

I have a great and old-fashioned desire that everything which I narrate should be very vividly present to your mind ; and being withal somewhat distrustful of my own powers of description, I know not how I can ensure this but by asking you from the outlines of the scenes which I present to you, to bring them in your imagination before your eyes. You must fancy yourself a spectator of the incidents which I describe, so ask of your imagination to call up the scene which I attempt to bring before you.

You are to fancy yourself looking at a family circle, sitting round a blazing fire in a snug drawing-room in Clare Street.* I do not much care how you manage to look in. I am one of the party myself, and will insure you full forgiveness if you are caught in the attempt to peep ; but that you may not disturb my narrative, it is better that you should remain undiscovered. The shutters are not closed, so that you might stand on the window-stool and look over the blinds ; but then you might not find

* A street in Dublin not very far from the College Park.

that a very comfortable position, for it is a bleak October night, and well nigh the end of October too, and the autumnal wind is passing down from Merrion Square, with a most melancholy howl, and we can hear it shaking the leafless boughs of the old trees in the College Park—boughs that it has stripped of their sear foliage that is strewed beneath; and the blast now seems, like a true robber, to be insulting them upon their nakedness. I do not suppose you will like the window-stool much, particularly as you would have only a pane of glass between you and comfort inside, and every flickering gleam of its red blaze, which that large faggot in the grate would cast towards you, would but tantalize you with the idea of warmth. However, you must see us, no matter how you manage it; you will see, as I have already said, a family party;—that old gentleman sitting in the arm-chair near the fire, with his white hair flowing over a manly forehead that betokens benevolence and firmness, is William D'Alton, Esq., one of his Majesty's justices of the peace for the county of——; that plain housewife-looking lady opposite is his wife; next the old lady is a fine,

ing of our chapter from the large family Bible which was still lying on the table ; Charles had extinguished the candles, that he might enjoy the melancholy stillness of the fire light ; and he and I were waiting for the striking of the clock, which was to be the intimation that our hour for retiring to College had arrived. He looked pale and anxious. The next morning was to be his examination morning ; and from his entrance up to the present period, Charles D'Alton had been invariably a successful candidate. He now looked as if intense application had injured his health, and on his wrinkled brow and quivering ashy lip were too evident the effects of many a night of watching over that study which is a weariness to the flesh. The toils of months were all to be decided on the morrow, and there was about him all the nervous anxiety that shewed at once how he had laboured and longed for the trial.

“ Well, Charles,” said his father, “ I suppose you are sure of the certificate to-morrow ? ”

Charles made no reply ; he seemed as if he was not sure.

“You told me,” continued his father, “that you never were so well prepared.”

“I do not think I ever was,” he answered hesitatingly; “certainly I never laboured one-half so much.”

“Indeed,” said his mother, “you have laboured too much, Charles—you must, after this examination, recruit—I fear you are laying the foundation of ill health.”

Charles became visibly and almost wildly agitated; he disengaged his arm from his sister’s waist; he rushed to the window, and apparently watched the dark masses of cloud, which we could see over the tops of the opposite houses drifting along the gloomy outline of the autumnal sky.

His sister followed him—she laid her hand upon his shoulder—“Dear Charles, you are unwell.” “No,” said he hastily, “reading has made me a little nervous. Come,” said he to me, as he buttoned his coat across his chest—“it is time for us to go to College.”

We took our leave—we walked home in silence—but, as he leaned upon my arm, I could perceive even in his step an agitation that sur-

prised me—I asked him if he was unwell; he answered that he was not, but the sigh, or rather sob, with which he accompanied his reply, shewed plainly that some secret bitterness was preying upon his soul. I imagined it was but the result of excessive anxiety upon a frame weakened by over-exertion. I accordingly thought it more prudent not to add to his depression by noticing it; and without either of us disturbing the stillness of our meditations, we reached the College gate. I was just about to knock for admittance, when Charles, drawing his cloak close round him, flung himself against one of the buttresses of the building, and appeared suddenly to bury himself in intense and painful thought. At my approach he started from his reverie; and fixing on me a painfully piercing glance, he asked me in a low and yet thrilling voice,—“Have you any faith in dreams?”

“Before I answer your strange question, tell me why you ask it.”

“A dream I had last night is pressing on my spirits—I had a strange—a very strange dream.”

I endeavoured to laugh him out of his folly,

but it seemed in vain—he fixed his eye upon the lamp which was burning over his head, and appeared to take a melancholy pleasure in gazing on its dull light.*

“Why,” continued he, half muttering to himself, half reasoning with me, “why should not our souls in sleep as naturally see the future, as in our waking hours they do the past? Why should not prescience be as natural to one state of existence as memory to the other?”

“Come, come, Charles,” said I, “it is very cold; no more philosophizing, if you please, at least until you get into your own rooms, and then if you choose, when near the fire, we will discuss the question you have proposed, whether the soul be not, like Janus, gifted with a double face, and that one pair of eyes looking towards the past, are always open in our waking hours, while the other pair looking towards the future, relieve guard in our sleep? And, by way of

* These were the days of the old oil lamps. Let me say that this does nothing to fix the date of this story. At the time of its publication the innovation of gas had not yet displaced in the College the venerable lights of our ancestors.

illustration, you will tell me the dream that has had so awfully depressing an effect upon your spirits."

He smiled, or attempted to smile at my gaiety—I drew his arm within mine, and we entered the gate together. I perceived that it was no common dream that had such an effect upon him. Of all the men I knew he was the least inclined to superstition—his spirits were lively and buoyant beyond description, and unlike most persons who are blessed with great animation, he was not subject to those occasional depressions which seem to be intended as a compensation for the increased amount of excitement.—Scarcely, therefore, were we seated over his blazing fire, when I begged of him to tell me the dream that had so frightened him.

"Do not laugh at my folly—for once I feel superstitious. You remember after the June examinations, when my father proposed that we should visit the Continent, and I refused, that I might read for this cursed examination—I did not do so without a struggle; and at that time I had a dream which I attributed to my suppressed desire to go abroad I thought that

my sister was urging me to depart, and a strange man came in while we were talking—a Frenchman in appearance—who told me, with all the strange and grotesque grimaces in the world, that it was my fate to see Paris, that no good could come of my opposing my fate, that I must give up my College reading and go to see his city; and when I refused, he raised up in his hand a little animal, which I imagined to be a scorpion, for I had never seen or even read a description of one—it was something like a small snake, but with very beautiful scales and bright red eyes, and it had a sharp horn upon its head, and a very sharp one upon its tail—and he showed me this, and said, ‘Master, this is for those that oppose their fate;’ I made a blow at the scorpion to kill it, and in doing so, I knocked down a table that stood beside my bed, and the noise I made awoke me.”

I could not help laughing at the singularity of the notion. “And what is there in this to frighten you? what do you believe to be represented by the scorpion?”

“Envy!” said he, in a voice whose loudness startled me.

"Then, my dear Charles," said I, "you need never fear the scorpion; you can afford to despise envy."

"I cannot afford to keep it here;" and he beat his heart.

"Oh!" said I, "this is absurd. I never knew one more free from envy. Whom do you envy? whom have you reason to envy?"

He rose from his seat; he stood over me, and looking in my face—he said, almost choking with the struggle that was manifestly going on—"I envy Vane."

I was indeed startled at this confession. Vane was a man who, by almost unparalleled industry, and the good fortune of being thrown into a bad division,* had contrived, although

* It is necessary to explain, that at the time at which this narrative refers, the public examinations in Dublin College were conducted under an arrangement by which the entire class were distributed into divisions, containing, according to the number in the class, from 30 to 40 each. One premium was awarded to each division. Under this arrangement it frequently happened that the best men of the class were thrown into one division, while there were others composed entirely of very inferior scholars.

possessed of little or no talent, to bear away considerable share of College honours. He had, consequently, become intolerably conceited. He and Charles had never been in collision, and I knew that Charles despised him ; and well might I wonder at the startling confession. Charles envy Vane ! Charles, the admired of all circles in which he moved — universally admitted to be the first scholar of his class — and Vane, the stupidest, and yet at the same time the most vainglorious of premium men, whose honours everybody attributed to accident, unless the few who were uncharitable enough to attribute them to the partiality of his tutor, who very frequently contrived to be his examiner.

“Do you despise me for the confession ?” said Charles, calmly.

“No,” said I ; “I believe that your envy of Vane, like the scorpion of the Frenchman, is but a chimera of your own imagination—you despise the man.”

“I do,” cried he ; “I despise—I hate ! I envy him. I hate myself for envying him : it was envy of him that kept me here all the

summer. I heard that it had been said, that did we come together, he would bear away honours from me: he said it himself. I fancied that we might possibly meet this October; and upon the bare possibility of this, I remained here all the summer to be prepared to lower his vanity. It was for this that I denied myself and my sister the pleasure of visiting France—that I have injured my health, and wasted away the taper of life until it is now flickering in its socket, for the chance, the very distant chance of humiliating one who I could scarcely regard as a rival, I feel that I have brought myself to the brink of the grave! Envy, accursed envy!” cried he, and he paced the room in violent agitation.

I hardly knew what to say. His whole frame shook with the violence of his emotions. Before I could recover from my astonishment, he began again:—“Last night I saw the same man again. I was lying awake—for the last three weeks I have scarcely slept—and that same Frenchman came to my bedside—I saw him as plainly as I see you now—and he stood over me with a most malicious grin, and ap-

peared to gloat over the tossings of my wearied and sleepless frame. I screamed when I saw him, and he laughed loudly, and said—‘Ah, master, you have opposed your destiny, and here it is—take it to your grave;’ and he aimed the scorpion right for my heart. I felt the sting and the trailing of the horrid creature along my breast and between my ribs and my flesh. I told you it was a dream—No! it was all real—it has coiled round my heart, and it is sickening me all day.”

He ceased; the vehemence of his exertions caused a cold and clammy perspiration to hang in large drops upon his brow. I now remarked what I had not before, that his features wore the stamp of consumption, and that his sides were shaken by the hectic cough.

Wearied by his violence, he flung himself upon a chair. I entreated of him to be calm, and to retire to his bed; that a little sleep might prepare him for the exertions of the morning.

“If,” said he, “I lie down, I shall not sleep—I shall only see the same horrid visions that in different shapes haunt me every night.” His glazed eyes and sunken temples bore but too

evident traces of the fevered vigils of his nights. With some difficulty, I persuaded him to go to bed, and this only by a promise that I would pass the night by his bedside. He remained awake for some time after he had lain down ; he spoke much of the nature of his feelings towards Vane. "I do not think I am envious," he said ; "and I thought my feeling towards Vane was emulation. I heard of his being spoken of as the cleverest man in his class ; I knew he did not deserve it—there are many who deserve that character better than either he or I ; but I am very sure I have more claims to the distinction than he has, and I was fretted that there should be any to accord it to him. I cherished this feeling ; I thought it was but a just indignation at false pretensions ; but it was envy. You remember Locke's definition of envy—'indignation at a good being possessed by another, which we think he should not have had before us.' That was just what I felt—mean, hateful—despicable envy. I did not know the passion that I was cherishing until it became too strong for me ; and now I feel that I hate Vane—that it will grieve me to hear to-morrow

of his success—the scorpion *is* twined round my heart.”

For two long hours I sat by his bed-side while he thus gave vent to the bitterness of self-reproach. He mourned, too, over the loss of his health, which he said his exertions during the summer, had irrevocably destroyed. “Look at me, Edward,” he said; “I am dwindled to a shadow. Envy, cursed fiend, at your shrine!” and he shook convulsively his closed fist, as if the impersonation of the passion stood before him; “at your shrine I have sacrificed my health and my peace of mind.”

Midnight had long passed when he sank into a feverish repose. I extinguished the taper which had been dimly burning on a little stand beside his bed, and throwing myself beside him without undressing, I soon resigned my harassed mind to slumber.

The deep and melodious toll of the great bell awoke us both next morning, for Charles slept as soundly as I did myself. All his usual gaiety returned: he seemed ashamed of the disclosures of the preceding night, and begged of me to look on all his strange conduct as the result of

nervousness from hard study, and with a light and airy step he hastened to the examination hall.

It so happened that urgent and unavoidable business required my presence several miles from town that day. I was not to return for a week; and I begged of Charles to write to me as soon as the examination was over—and bidding him adieu, and wishing him success, I parted from him at the steps of the theatre in which the examination was held. During the week of my absence I heard nothing from Charles; post after post I was disappointed—my heart misgave me—I had an unaccountable dread over me of I knew not what—I thought of his possible aberration of intellect, of which his demeanour on the last night I had been with him furnished but too strong grounds for apprehension; and this suggested fears upon which I could not bear to dwell. Rejoiced, indeed, was I when the week had expired, and I found myself once more on the top of the vehicle that was to convey me back to town.

It was dusk when the coach by which I travelled stopped in Capel Street. I was anxious

at once to see Charles, and in my impatience I drove to College, forgetting that at that hour of the evening I should be much more likely to find him at his father's residence in Clare Street.

The lamps in College had been lit; and after this, by usage immemorial, it is unlawful to bring a vehicle within the walls. I ran eagerly across the courts; the evening moon was shining brightly, and the tall shadows of the brick chimneys were projected darkly upon the courts. I was not, however, in a mood to admire either the moonbeams or the shadows. With a hurried step I hastened to Charles's apartments, and knocked at the door—there was no answer. I knocked again—a third time—still without success; I turned away in disappointment. I was met in the doorway of the building by a talkative fellow named Pringle, with whom I had a slight acquaintance.

"Ah!" said he, "you were looking for D'Alton; poor fellow! he seems greatly cast down by his defeat."

"Defeat!" repeated I, with visible astonishment.

"Ah, then you have not heard that he has been beaten for the certificate?"

"Beaten by whom?" asked I quickly.

"By Vane," replied my informant. "You know there was very little chance of their being in one division—but so few went in the examination that they were brought together; and Dr. Meddleum, who examined them, said that there was not the slightest comparison between their merits. He said at commons that he thinks Vane immeasurably superior."

"Was the examination a fair one?" I eagerly asked.

"Oh! aw! I suppose it was; neither of them was Meddleum's pupil, and so he had no reason to be unfair. I have heard it said that D'Alton was not prepared for any opposition, and had not been reading; that, in fact, he was taken off his guard; but, to my certain knowledge, he has been reading at least fourteen hours a day, and Vane has been idling. But I always thought D'Alton an over-rated man; you will generally find that these men who are so much cried up for talent find their own level."

There are always men in the world ready to

rejoice at the failure, or the depreciation of their superiors—men who, incapable of rivalling excellence, take a malignant pleasure in lowering it to their own standard—and are always ready to claim credit for superior sagacity by an *ex post facto* mode of prophesying what has already occurred.

I now remembered the mistake I had made in coming into College, and bent my steps towards Clare Street. I could not account for what had occurred. I was satisfied that the examination had not been a just one; but whether from ignorance or design on the part of the examiner, I was unable to decide. Dr. Meddleum's character furnished equal grounds for either suspicion. Dr. Meddleum was a man who, with some good qualities, had yet contrived to manage so that nobody respected him; although by a settled and laboured pomposity of deportment, and by an officious and systematic interference with everybody's business, he endeavoured to attach an importance to his character—he succeeded in associating his name with an abundant share of self-importance. I know not how it was, but although good humoured,

as far as his pomposity would permit him, he was universally unpopular in College. It was said that in his early days he had been a Roman Catholic; and although he had become a proselyte to the good things of fellowship, a rumoured predilection for his ancient faith did not perhaps tend to find him favour in the eyes of the Protestant students of Trinity—while the unhappy propensity which he manifested for intruding himself into everybody's business, and usurping occasionally, in *propria persona*, the functions of Dean, Senior Lecturer, or Provost, as the case might be, did not raise him much in public estimation.

His intellectual qualifications were not certainly above mediocrity; and even with the aid of a good memory, and intense application, the length to which his studies for fellowship were protracted at a time when fellowships were more easily obtained than they are now, was become a by-word both among fellows and students; and there was a meanness, or at least an absence of the high sense of honour connected with many of his acts, that seemed to lend a shadow of excuse to otherwise unjustifiable sneers at the low-

ness of his extraction. This was the individual to whom poor Charles' fortunes had been confided ; and I felt an involuntary thrill of indignation when I reflected that by what in my passion I called the fictitious distinctions of society, my poor friend's peace of mind was made to depend, very likely, upon the caprice of Dr. Meddleum. I continued in a train of reflection that was neither very profitable nor proper, and I believe that I could have been half a radical, had I indulged in it much longer. Fortunately, the train of my meditations was interrupted by my arrival at the termination of my walk.

I found nobody in the house occupied by the D'Altons but an old servant woman. From her I learned that Mr. D'Alton having been unexpectedly summoned to the country, his wife and daughter had accompanied him. Charles, my informant added, was much improved in his health, and had remained in College.

Thus had all my apprehensions proved groundless ; all the imaginary and indefinite terrors which had haunted me dispersed—Charles was even improved in his health. I was not surprised at the sudden departure of the family ;

for, before I left town, Mr. D'Alton expressed an apprehension that an important and intricate matter of business would require his presence in the country. I retraced my steps to College, relieved in my mind from many harassing apprehensions, and yet more puzzled than ever to account for Charles' violation of his promise that he would write to me.

An interview with Charles brought with it no satisfactory solution of the problem; he pleaded to my reproachful accusations some vague excuse about want of time!! In reply to my earnest enquiries after his health, he gaily said that he never was better in his life—that his illness was altogether in the imagination of his mother and sister. All allusion to the subject of his examination he carefully parried; his spirits seemed more buoyant than ever; his conversation was a continued flow of merriment—but to me his demeanour was strangely altered. There was no confidence in his manner, no warmth of affection, nothing of the friend—he seemed to have sunk down in the cold heartlessness of the man of the world. I could not endure this; and, as he neither sought my

society, nor appeared particularly pleased when I sought his—without any quarrel, or apparent cause of separation, our intimacy gradually appeared to be drawing to a close—and in a few weeks we saw no more of each other than an accidental meeting, when, perhaps in our walks round the park, we met upon the terms of familiar college acquaintances, and passed on.

All this was to me quite inexplicable. My pride prevented me from seeking an explanation where, perhaps, it would have been denied. It sometimes occurred to me to do so, and thus bring the matter to a decisive test. I could not bear, however, the appearance of forcing my friendship upon any one, and I abandoned the idea. New friends, too, came in to fill up the chasm which a separation from Charles had at first created, and every day my regret at the termination of our intimacy was becoming less; the little, indeed, that I still retained was rather a point of conscience than of feeling—a forced tribute, which I fancied to be due to the memory of past regard than any rising in my breast of present affection. I am not, be it remembered, writing the story of sentiment, but of human

nature. If there be those who think that affection should continue unaltered, even when the object of it is changed—and whose opinion it therefore is, that I should not so easily have permitted the place of a friend to be filled up, but indulged in melancholy and solitary complaints upon the faithlessness of human nature, I cannot help them—perhaps I ought to have done so—all I know is, that I did not. I neither wrote hypochondriac verses, nor took solitary walks—I lost neither my appetite nor my spirits—I ate, drank, laughed, and talked as usual—and, as I have said, in a very few weeks I began to think of Charles very little, and to feel the want of him not at all.

And yet Charles and I had been friends, almost from the cradle—companions in infancy—playfellows in childhood—and friends in youth; sharing in each other's joys and sorrows, and each acquainted with all the feelings of the other. We had wandered together over the mountains, and often had we sat upon the topmost ridge of some far-off hill the livelong length of a summer's day, and gazed upon the distant ocean, as we formed a hundred wild

schemes to be happy or to be great. The friendship of years appeared to be forgotten in a less number of weeks—and I was satisfied because I felt it was not my fault. So easily can the human mind reconcile itself to an alteration and reversion of its oldest habits of feeling and of thought.

I will not deny but that there were times when something pressed upon my mind. I felt as if I would wish to unburden all my thoughts in some confiding ear, and thought bitterly of him on whose affection I had been wont to throw myself for sympathy. This was only natural; but when such reflections suggested themselves, I always hummed a tune, and so dismissed them.

* * * *

Autumn had deepened into winter, and the days were now very nearly at their shortest—the melancholy howling of the autumn blast, to which I used to love to listen of an evening, as it swept the red leaves on its circling eddies through the park—had given place to the shrill

whistle of the keen and frosty December breeze. My intimacy with Charles had never been renewed, and our friendship seemed as transient as the summer flowers—or the green foliage, which, but a few months ago, had clothed the forest, and now was no more seen. I sometimes could not help making the comparison. Alas ! I knew not that in the meantime the spring and the summer of my poor friend's life had also passed away for ever—and all the hopes of his early promise were now doomed prematurely to close in the dreary and cheerless winter of the grave.

It was within a few days of Christmas, when one evening, just as the deep and melancholy tolling of the great bell had begun to announce the approach of the evening muster hour—or, as a collegian would say, night roll—I was not a little surprised at receiving a message from Charles, requesting me immediately to see him, as he was dangerously ill. I was agitated as much by the request as by the intelligence. I did not, however, hesitate long—I hurried across the ill-lit courts, and a few minutes found me by his bedside—yes, by his bedside, for he was

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lying, or rather sitting, in bed. A solitary candle, almost obscured by the length of unremoved snuff, was shedding an indistinct light through the room; his features wore a ghastly look, and a heavy film gathered over his eyes. A table beside his bed was piled with several huge books; and there also lay a dagger! and a human skull!! His eye brightened when he saw me. "Edward," said he, feebly stretching out a hand emaciated to the last degree, "it is very kind of you to come to see me die."

He pronounced these words with an effort, as if speaking gave him pain. I cautioned him to be silent, and told him I was come to nurse him until he would be quite well. He pointed to the skull, and said, "Never! never! never!"

I asked him how he felt affected. "Do you forget the scorpion?" he said, and shuddered; "ha! ha! ha!" said he, laughing wildly. He sunk back in the bed, overcome by the exertion, and muttered something which I could not hear.

I called his servant—a perfect example of what a college woman was in the times of which I write. I asked her how long he had been in

this state? "Why, he has been in his bed since chapel time on Sunday," (this was Thursday,) said she, "but I think he has been worse to-day nor I seen him any day yet."

"And what has been the matter with him?" asked I.

"That's more nor I know," said she, apparently quite unconcerned—with the greatest indifference blowing the bellows to expedite the boiling of a huge kettle which she had placed upon the fire.

"Are you not ashamed of having neglected him so?" said I angrily.

"Neglected him?" said she, still more angrily, "didn't I come twicet a day to see if he wanted anything? it's rest the poor dear gentleman wants, and if you go home to your own place and leave him quiet he'll be well enough in the morning;" and having delivered this authoritative opinion, she resumed, or rather continued, (for it had experienced no interruption beyond a momentary cessation,) her occupation of puffing at the fire, with the most imperturbable composure.

I had not time to waste upon her; I left her

to her employment, and returned to Charles. He had now brought the skull into bed, and was fondling it with an affectionate concern that would, under other circumstances, have been ludicrous ; but the lankness of his own emaciated jaws, and the ashiness of his bloodless lips, told me that he would soon be an inmate of that abode from which he had borrowed his extraordinary plaything.

He kissed the fleshless lips of the skull, and patted the crown of its head—and he seemed to take a particular delight in protruding his fingers through the eyeless apertures—and then he laughed loud and long at his own conceit. I could not be mistaken in that laugh—it was the laugh of a maniac !—I glanced fearfully at the dagger, and knew not how to interrupt him in his terrible occupation.

“ This, Edward,” said he, “ is Nero. This chap, quiet as he is now, was Emperor of Rome—see what all human greatness comes to !—but I can tell you,” added he, “ he was very much calumniated—he was a humane prince, but he put an end to the vices of the court, and so they hired the historians to abuse him ; but I’ll settle

that, I'll write a pamphlet in his defence. Won't I, old boy?" said he, and he pressed the skull to his lips, and laughed louder and more terribly than before.

Judge of my surprise when, as I looked on this strange scene, I saw a quantity of blood trickle or rather pour down upon the bosom of his shirt—his face was flushed with a hectic hue—he dropped the skull, which was strangely stained with the blood that was welling from his mouth, and sank in the bed. I feared that he was dying—there was nothing at hand that I could administer—I put a glass of cold water to his lips—it seemed to revive him. He indistinctly articulated "It is only another effort of nature." I called loudly for his collegewoman, but she was gone. I knew not what to do—almost like a madman I ran to the opposite rooms, and telling the inmates that D'Alton was dying, I begged of them to run for a physician. One of them immediately complied, and the other returned with me to watch by the bedside of the sufferer.

He had by this time recovered a little from the faintness which the hemorrhage had pro-

duced; but he lay silent and exhausted in the bed. His hands, however, still grasped the skull, and he made occasional efforts to bring it to his lips. At last he started up, as if with suddenly invigorated strength. "I am better," said he, "I am always better after the bleeding. You know the scorpion draws my blood, and this gathers in my lungs; and when I get rid of that I am always better."

I felt as if the sentence of his death had been pronounced,—“I am always better after the bleeding!” So this had happened before! I begged him to be silent, and with difficulty we persuaded him; he took the skull in his hand and seemed absorbed in his own meditations upon Nero.

With increasing impatience we counted the minutes, until we imagined our messenger might return with medical assistance. But it was not until a late hour that he came back, bringing with him Dr. P——, at that time one of the most eminent medical practitioners in Dublin. He could not, it appeared, get out of college after night-roll, without a written pass from the dean; and some little difficulty and delay were

occasioned by the necessity of obtaining one.* The fault, perhaps, was in the fiery impatience of the young man, but it was not only by braving the penalties of violated discipline, but actually by overcoming the physical strength of the porters at the gate, that he accomplished his end. In his search for Dr. P—— time was lost, during which the tide of life in poor Charles had been ebbing fast.

However, Dr. P—— had at length arrived, and we quickly ushered him into the poor patient's room. He was particular in enquiries, to which he could get but very unsatisfactory replies; and Charles' own answers were very wild and incoherent. He adopted, however, such immediate remedies as he thought the case required;

* I rather think the blame, so far as blame attached to any one, was attributable to the surliness or ill temper of the porter who conveyed or professed to convey the message to the humane and benevolent gentleman who then filled the office of dean. Thanks, however, to the energy of our messenger, the delay was neither long nor material. I need scarcely add that no attempt was made to enforce the penalties of academic law against the young man who violated it in his anxiety to save a fellow-student's life.

and having given us instructions how to treat him through the night, directing, on the slightest return of the bleeding, that he should be immediately sent for, and forbidding Charles to open his lips, he left us, promising to call early in the morning.

I sat up with Charles that night. He passed it quietly, and there was no return of the dreaded hemorrhage. I watched beside his bed all night. Towards morning he slept soundly—but the difficulty that attended his respiration proved that it was not refreshingly.

Dr. P—— paid his promised visit early in the morning. He put many and particular questions to Charles, about the origin of his illness; the poor fellow only repeated the old story about the scorpion, adding extravagances, if possible, still more wild. Dr. P—— appeared greatly shocked, and anxious to break off a conversation which, on the patient's part, was but a succession of the most incoherent sentences; but Charles continued, in spite of his efforts, to talk.

"Doctor," said he, "I am sure I shall be better soon—the scorpion has sucked all my

blood, and I feel as if he had eaten away all my heart; when all is gone, he must soon die of hunger, and then I shall be well."

In vain Dr. P—— tried to prevent him from continuing to indulge in the wanderings of his delirium; he complained to him of me that I had not kept his room quiet, that I had permitted dead corpses to walk all night about the room!! This was very extraordinary, as during the night he betrayed no symptoms of the alarm which the presence of such strange visitants might naturally be supposed to produce.

As I listened to this narration of the absurd imaginings of a once noble intellect, I felt almost ashamed that even his physician should be witness of the melancholy wanderings of my poor friend. It is a fearful thing to see the human mind thus shattered. It is a humiliating thing to human pride, to be made to feel that all our boasted superiority hangs, as it were, upon a thread—a thread that may be snapped in an instant; and that the intellect that to-day is the proudest and the noblest, may to-morrow be prostrate and abased. But when we are

called on to witness, in a friend, this miserable prostration of all that is noble, and all that is distinctive in the nature of man—then, indeed, we feel the littleness—I had almost said the worthlessness of all our vaunted reason; but most assuredly we feel the dependence of our human nature—its dependence, even in its most god-like faculties, on a power higher than its own.

Alas! alas! years have not effaced from my soul the recollection of the wild words of the unhappy maniac, who had once been my bosom friend.

* * * *

When Dr. P—— had contrived to bring to a termination the painful colloquy—I can scarcely call it conversation—which evidently had distressed him, he took me aside and told me that he felt it his duty to apprise me that Charles had not many days to live. “He is,” said he, “in the last stage of pulmonary disease, which must very soon terminate his life; besides this, there is a melancholy mental hallucination which is preying on his mind as fast and mercilessly as disease is on his physical

frame. A very few days, however," continued he, "must release him from this pitiable state."

This intelligence was no more than I expected. Dr. P—— told me that all that medical aid could do would be to alleviate the sufferings of his last hours, and advised me instantly to write to inform his family of his real state.

With a heavy heart I sat down to communicate to Mr. D'Alton the melancholy intelligence of poor Charles' state. I thought it better to disguise nothing, although my heart was faint, and my hand trembled as I wrote to the father—the fond, the proud, the doting father—the heart-rending announcement, that but a few days and he would be a father no more. I despatched my letter; and as a nurse-tender, whom Dr. P—— had sent, arrived, I permitted her to relieve me, for a short time, from the melancholy office of watching the poor patient, and stretched myself on some chairs to refresh my frame, wearied by the last night's painful vigils, with a few hours' sleep.

It would be but an unnecessary harrowing up of my own feelings to record minutely all the

details of the scenes to which, for the next two days, I was a witness. Those who have watched by the death-bed of some one who was dear to them, may imagine what their feelings could have been, if they had been condemned by that bedside to listen to the wild and monstrous ravings of insanity—if the few hours that were to intervene, before that separation, which was to be an eternal one—hours which the heart of affection would regard as a treasure, of which the smallest portions were too precious to be lost—if they had seen these precious hours wasted in the mad wanderings of delirium. I sat by Charles' bedside, and I saw him on the verge of that eternal world, from which no mortal returns; and he was altogether unconscious that he soon must pass into another state of being. I heard him speak of all things but that awful change which was so soon to come over him. I heard—gracious God! I heard from the lips of the dying maniac, once—and thank God it was but once—in a paroxysm of madness, expressions that I dare not repeat. He fancied himself a Pagan of old Rome!—he believed himself,

by Nero's orders, the persecutor of the Christians!! and his words were in character with the dreadful office his frenzy had assigned him; but I will not, I cannot write them down. No! it was enough that I was forced to listen to the language in which he spoke of all that Christians venerate — all that Christians worship. The hour during which this awful frenzy lasted, was the only period when an expression passed his lips that Religion herself might not have listened to with complacency.

At times he was comparatively calm; a strange mixture of truth and falsehood, of memory and imagination, appeared to have possession of his mind. The evening before Christmas he appeared suddenly to return to his right mind. All day he had been comparatively rational and collected. Late at night he called me, and begged of me to bring him the Bible, and read to him a portion of its contents. I gladly complied with his request. I had then, I grieve to say, but little knowledge of the book. I felt, as I opened it, and turned over its pages, how little fitted I was to minister con-

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solation to a departing fellow-sinner. I made no selection; I thought I could not go astray, as all was the word of God. I accidentally happened on the third chapter of the Epistle of James. He listened attentively until I came to the words—"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be." He stopped me—he appeared confused at the words. "Edward," said he, shuddering fearfully, "I have an indistinct recollection of a terrible, a very terrible dream. I thought," and his teeth chattered with horror, "that I had blasphemed."

I knew not what to say. I knew the dream was but the paroxysm of madness, which had left its indistinct traces upon his brain.

"Charles! dear Charles! think no more of your dreams; let me read to you the blessed word of God!"

He acquiesced; I turned from one part of the sacred volume to another, and I do not believe that I am superstitious in trusting that even my ignorance was guided to many passages applicable to his state. Strange to say, he now seemed conscious of his danger; he spoke of his death

as an event, the no very distant approach of which was not only possible, but probable.

“Edward,” said he, “it is hard—I am young, I am too young to die; must I leave all—my father, my mother, my sister—must I lie down in the cold dark grave?”

I dared not attempt to deceive him, by misrepresenting his real state. I feebly endeavoured to draw his attention to those truths which point to an existence beyond the grave. He was calm, and, apparently, resigned. He expressed no wish to see a clergyman; and as it was a perhaps imprudent allusion of mine to the subject that had drawn on that dreadful outbreaking of his madness, upon which I still shudder to think, I feared to mention it again. I looked to Heaven for help to bear me through the trying scene. For some time, he conversed with me rationally, nay, even eloquently, upon the subject of religion.

“Edward,” he said, “I have thought too little of my Creator; men always seek him when sickness or distress presses upon them—they fancy that he is a being to aid them in the hour of need, and to be forgotten in the time of glad-

ness—will God receive the offering of such a time? I have neglected him when I had health and strength—will he hear me now?”

He looked earnestly in my face for an answer. I spoke of the mercy of God—I reminded him of the words of God himself—“Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out.”

He turned on his side and seemed satisfied. He continued muttering, for some time—what I could not exactly distinguish—but could easily perceive it to be a prayer. At last, he asked me what day of the month it was—I told him it was Christmas eve—he passed his hand across his brow, as if endeavouring to recollect something that had escaped his memory; he asked me—“Is not to-morrow the day when Christ was born?”

“Yes, Charles,” said I, startled at the question, which I feared portended a returning aberration of intellect.

The moonbeams were streaming in through the chinks of the shutters. He desired me to open the shutters. It was now past midnight—the moon was shining directly opposite the window. I could not help gazing with admira-

tion on her soft radiance: it caused such a striking contrast to the dim red light of the taper by which I had been reading. Charles sat up in bed to enjoy the luxury of the sight. "Edward," said he, "I have often looked on a blue sky and a cloudless moon, but I never saw one I loved so much before; it was under such a sky as this that the shepherds kept watch over their flocks. Did not the angels sing something about good-will towards men?"

I read the chapter in which the angels' anthem to the shepherds is contained. When I came to the words "good-will towards men," he repeated them with earnestness. "I tell you, Edward, why I repeat these words—I think I shall die this morning, and this is the birth-day of my Redeemer—the day of good-will towards men—do you not think, that if God takes my soul to-night—on this night—good-will towards men—he would take it to himself?" He did not wait for my reply. He said, if I would remove the taper, and leave the shutters open, he would try to sleep. I did as he desired, and in a very few minutes he was in a quiet slumber.

He continued to sleep for several hours, and

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I could not but be thankful that his reason had resumed its place so far as to be even turned to those objects which were to make for his everlasting peace. I sat beside his bed watching the moon until she went down, and I had nothing to break the monotony of my vigil but the periodical cry of the watchman from the street, as he proclaimed the passing of the hours, or, occasionally, the distant and faint sounds of riot and confusion as they were borne through the stillness of the midnight air, perhaps from the dismal haunts of infamy and vice. The nurse-tender had, at my instance, retired to rest for that night—I pitied the poor woman, and had persuaded her to take one night's sound repose.

About five in the morning, I was started from a reverie by the sound of Charles' voice: he told me to light a candle, and to bring him a Greek prosody, which I would find in a particular corner of his bookcase—I did so. I found the volume precisely as he told me, and brought it to his bedside.

"Look out," said he, "for the quantity of *πανταπᾶσιν*, (he pronounced the word as I have marked it,) and tell me have I pronounced it

wrong." I did as he desired me, and told him that his quantity was false; he laughed, and begged of me to do the same with regard to the word *ἡδίκηει*. I did so, and the result was the same.

"So both my quantities were false," said he, laughing again; "*πανταπαῖσιν, ἡδίκηει*," repeated he, still adhering to the false pronunciation.

"What do you think of these things for, now?" asked I.

"Only two of Meddleum's quantities," answered he thoughtfully.*

"Charles, dear," said I, "you ought to think of other things now."

"I have not forgotten all my prosody yet," he replied; "it is only three weeks since I was in my examinations, (the interval had been nearly two months!) and I have not been well since, but now that I have got over this little fit of illness, all will be well. I have been," added he, "some time engaged in preparing a Greek prosody. I will go to the country to-

* I afterwards learned that Dr. Meddleum had actually, at the examination, corrected Charles for the true pronunciation of both these words, substituting that which the poor fellow then used.

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morrow, and finish it ; and I will prove that all the prosodians, and all the Greek poets, are wrong about these words—they are *πανταύσις* and *ἡδίκηαι*,” and he laughed immoderately at the notion.

I was shocked to hear him talk thus, as if all the impressions of the night before had been forgotten. I endeavoured to recall his mind to more serious subjects. I asked him if I should not read the Bible.

“I will read a chapter myself,” said he, talking unusually loud, “when I get up and dress. The Bible, Edward, is a very fine book—I shall not read so hard for college again—we will all go to the country ; and I will study the Bible—I must become really religious : I will marry a religious woman—We will all go to the country : you must come to us in spring. You know spring is de—light—help—me—O—God !”

A gurgling noise choked the words in his throat, and he sank down—some blood frothed upon his lips. I lifted him up—he attempted to speak. I called loudly for the nurse-tender. I sat behind him in the bed, and he leaned his head upon my breast—my clothes were slightly

stained with the blood from his mouth—I raised his head, which had fallen upon my arm—but all was over—the last convulsive struggle was still quivering on his features—in another few seconds his spirit had for ever quitted its earthly tenement.

The nurse-tender had been by this time summoned by my cries. She stood over the body with the carelessness of one who had often seen the death-beds of the young. I gently disengaged the lifeless form which had been Charles D'Alton from my arms, and laid his head upon the pillow. "Poor young gentleman!" said she, with a tone of voice that indicated the pity of habit rather than of feeling; "poor young gentleman! he will make a handsome corpse."

I rushed from the room—a thousand emotions crowded upon my mind—bitterly I upbraided myself for having permitted the coldness of a madman to repel me from the duty of a friend. In agony of mind, I paced up and down the apartment which had been the sitting-room of my friend. When grief had partly exhausted itself by its vehemence, I threw up one

of the windows, and admitted the fresh air. I then sat down, and looked across the courts upon which the windows of the sitting-room opened ; the dismal lamps were almost expiring, and some were altogether extinguished, while a few more were flickering in the blast. There was little light except from the stars, which shone with a peculiar lustre upon the frosty blue of the sky, and what was reflected from the ground, for during the night a shower of snow had completely covered it. I know not how long I sat. The nurse-tender left the room, I supposed, to seek for assistance in laying out the body. I felt the chill of the keen blast a relief to my throbbing temples. Just as the first grey of the morning had begun to tinge the heavens, I perceived, through the indistinct and gloomy twilight, two figures making their way towards the building. As they came nearer, I recognised them to be Charles's father and sister. I ran to meet them at the door—his father read the truth in my looks. "He is gone!" he cried. I could not answer. They both rushed past me towards his bed-room—the room in which he now lay a corpse. I tried to follow them, but I

scarcely could—his sister's voice was the first I heard—never shall I forget the tone in which she screamed, or rather shrieked—"O God! I have no brother!"

* * * *

Reader! I have thought it wiser here to end my chapter. I might, it is true, have added something to its length. I might have described to you the melancholy and unusual spectacle which the hearse presented in the College courts, when it came to take away the body of my friend. I might have even told you of the sad ceremony, when we laid his poor remains to rest among "the clods of the valley;" and how we heard the clay sound hollow, as it fell from the sexton's shovel upon the boards of his coffin. I might have dwelt upon the groans of a father—the heart-broken grief of a mother—or the tears of a sister. These ordinary attendants upon sorrow there are few who have not witnessed for themselves.

Years have rolled away since that Christmas morning, on which the spirit of my poor friend left its earthly tenement, may I humbly hope to realize that good-will, the thought of which came to

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him in the waking vision of the night. Many new years' days, with their joyous thoughts to the living have risen on the grave where we laid him, yet his dying scene is present to me as if it was yesterday. A noble spirit sank ; a mighty heart was crushed ; and in that grave lie buried hopes as fair, and there are stilled impulses as high as ever marked the early years of the youth of promise.

The story is an old one. Who can tell how often

“Science self-destroyed her favourite son ?”

how many times has mental exertion worn out the intellectual frame, and the hard-earned triumphs and the glorious toil of that exertion ended in madness and the tomb ?

“Fungar inani munere.” All that loved him are gone, and his father's home is tenanted by strangers. It is but a few weeks since I pulled the tall weeds from his neglected grave. “Peace be with thy ashes, my earliest and my truest friend.”

CHAPTER III.

THE MARINER'S SON.

I WILL not dispute with any of my readers who may be heretical enough to say that the occurrence which I am about to narrate in this chapter, does not properly fall within any definition that can be framed of the word Romance. I find none among my memoranda which possess a deeper interest in an appeal to the best feelings of our nature ; none more worthy to find a place in chapters which profess to record remarkable or touching incidents in College life.

Among those whom a successful career in College raised from an humble station, there were few who more attracted at once the admiration and sympathy of their contemporaries, than the individual whom I shall designate by

the name of Armour. I know not how it was, but his early history was very generally known ; he was above the false pride which would have made him wish to conceal it.

That history was shortly this. His father was a seafaring man in a port in the south of Ireland. During the war, the merchant schooner which "Captain" Armour, as he was called, commanded, and in which his little all had been, in the literal sense of the word, embarked, had left the port, and nothing was been heard of her for six years. No one doubted that she had been lost in a terrible storm which followed the day of her sailing. It was not for six years afterwards, that his wife was informed that the Admiralty had received intelligence, through some exchanged prisoners, that the schooner had been captured by a French privateer ; the captain and crew had been carried prisoners into a French port. The same channel conveyed also the information that the captain had died in prison.

Even after this interval of years, the blow fell heavy on the heart of the young widow, whom he had left, when he last set sail, with

one child, a boy, at the time of his father's departure, of about six years old. Her husband had left her with a sum of money which he had intended as the supply of her immediate wants. Beyond this, and a small interest in the house in which they lived and its furniture, she had no provision. All her earthly means, as well as her heart's best treasure, had been on board the ill-fated "Fanny"—her own name had been given to the ship, the only thing in the world which divided her husband's affection with herself. Some help afforded her by her own relatives, with her trifling earnings at needle-work, and something derived from letting lodgings, barely enabled her to live. The latter resources, in a remote and not very flourishing seaport, were poor and precarious enough. Offers were made to her of shelter elsewhere; but until the news was brought from the Admiralty, nothing could induce her to leave her old abode. To every entreaty which kindness addressed to her, she gave but one answer—she wished her husband, when he returned, to find her in their home. Of the certainty of his return no argument could induce her to doubt. Long after

she had left it, the townspeople would tell how every Sunday evening, and frequently too on week-day evenings, she used to walk to the hill on which the lighthouse of the port was built, and sit down on the white-washed wall that enclosed the little space round the lighthouse, and look wistfully out to sea, as if she expected to see the white sails of her husband's barque. In these visits she was accompanied by her little boy, who held her hand, and, like her, sat down upon the wall, and, like her, gazed anxiously and wonderingly towards the deep.

At last, after six years' weary waiting, came the tidings from the Admiralty, obtained for her by the enquiries of the clergyman of the parish, and then the widow was seen once, and only once more, to visit her old seat beside the lighthouse. She was dressed in deep, but humble, mourning. Her little boy wore a black coat, which seemed to have been made of a woman's worn dress. A broad black ribbon was ostentatiously displayed as the fastening of his shirt-collar. These constituted his only garb of mourning. The rest of his dress was

unchanged. The widow was too poor to provide him with an entire suit of black.

Soon after this she sold off her little furniture and left the town. It was understood that she had gone to reside with a relative, in one of the midland counties; but of this shelter the death of that relative soon deprived her; and, after struggling for a while with privations and without a settled home, she located herself in Dublin, where she contrived to support herself by keeping a small trimming shop on Aston's Quay. Strange to say, her name remained up to a very recent period over that shop.

The history of her boy was one not very singular in Ireland. He became a pupil of the parish school, and was fortunate enough to attract the notice, first of his schoolmaster, then of the clergyman of the parish. The latter, believing that he discerned in him superior abilities, placed him in the way of obtaining a classical education. Trinity College offered to his humble merit a shelter and a home. First sizarship, then scholarship, rewarded his industry, and, at the time of the incident I am

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about to narrate, he was a candidate for fellowship with more than a fair prospect of success.

More than fifteen years had now passed since his father had left the harbour of —, in that gallant barque which was destined never to return. His mother had had, in the early days of her widowhood, her offers of marriage, which, perhaps, prudence might have induced her to accept—but she had rejected them all. She had devoted herself entirely to her child. In her share of his rising fortunes she had been more than repaid, and her heart gushed with pride and thankfulness when she had at last persuaded herself that she would actually live to see her son “a Fellow of the College.”

But during all those years her heart had clung to the hope that her husband was still alive. When the intelligence came from the Admiralty she could no longer set her own wild imaginings against the matter-of-fact reasonings of her friends. Of late her hopes had received what to her seemed a decisive confirmation. A letter from some foreign place was known to have come for “Mrs. Armour” to the post office

of the port she had left. She had gone no one knew where. After an interval of more than a year, she learned accidentally that such a letter had been seeking her. It had long since disappeared in the ghostly receptacle of straying letters, and all efforts to trace the precious document were vain.

Her son, who had learned to adopt all his mother's hopes and anxieties, believed, like her, that his father one day would come back ; and from the time they heard of the missing letter, a prayer for his safe return formed one of the petitions which each Sabbath evening were offered up in her family devotions, which on that evening her son always shared.

And thus, while every one else who had known him believed him—when they thought of him at all—to be long since dead—when nearly sixteen years had gone by since token or sign had given an intimation of his existence ; when a period had passed in which the most passionate love may well forget its most darling object ; fifteen years since his last caress to his wife, and his last blessing to his boy—and these fond hearts were still, in their undying faith, praying to heaven for the wanderer's return.

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In the early morning of the day on which he was to present himself for the fellowship examination, that fond son had repaired to his mother's abode to obtain her blessing.

"It will help me, mother, in my examination," he said, as he asked it. When she had given it to him, and kissed his pale cheek, she whispered in his ear that she had had, the night before, a happy dream. "I dreamed that you were a fellow, and that your father was come back." "I have more faith, mother," he said, "in your blessing than in your dream."

And with a muttered "God bless you" once more from his parent's lips, the young man sped his way back to the College to present himself at the long wished-for, and yet dreaded, examination.

Fellowship examination in these days was a grand and imposing spectacle. In Dublin College fellowship was, it must be remembered, an ample and honourable provision for life, and the competition for it involved an amount of study, and demanded an ability which made the struggle for it one of the deepest interest

The examination was held on the four days immediately preceding Trinity Sunday. Near the upper end of the noble room, that is called the Theatre or examination Hall, was formed a circle, or rather oval, round the interior of which were a few seats. Behind these seats successive tiers of benches rose for the accommodation of those whom curiosity or interest attracted to witness the great intellectual contest which was going on in the arena below. On one of the semi-circles of that arena were placed the seats of the examiners—the Provost and seven senior fellows. Opposite to them on the other, sat the candidates—men whose pale faces told the tale of many a midnight hour spent in that “much study, which is a weariness to the flesh.” Notwithstanding the presence of spectators, indiscriminately admitted, it is not possible to conceive anything more perfect than the stillness which prevailed, a stillness only broken by the voice of the examiner, or the nervous and agitated accents of the examined. The examination was conducted in Latin, and, although in many—indeed, most of the subjects—it was impossible for the great majority of those present to understand either the question or the

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answer, yet it was strange to witness the hush of expectation with which every one watched the interrogatory and the response ; the anxiety with which they waited for the encouraging “recte domine,” or the shake of the head, and the “non domine non,” with which the examiner accepted or rejected each answer, while at the former eight pencils in the inner circle, and ten times eight in the outer tiers, were raised to mark in carefully kept lists the successful answer opposite the name of the candidate who gave it.*

* Fellowship examination still retains, in part, the characteristics above described. But the examination is no longer conducted in Latin, and written questions, given in private, have partly displaced the public oral examination of former times. The substitution of a living language, however desirable for the purposes of the examination, has taken something from the impressiveness and solemnity of the proceeding. In point of fact, all questions and answers are attended with less deliberation ; but, independent of this, it makes a change in the whole character of the scene. Conducted in English, the fellowship examination partakes more of the bustle of ordinary life. The use of Latin had an effect analogous to that of “the dim religious light” which was diffused through the theatre. Some one, in old times, irreverently said that the ghost of old Latinity

To the candidates, perhaps, the ordeal was as severe as any to which intellectual power could be subjected. It lasted, it is true, but for four hours each day—from eight to ten in the morning, and from two to four in the afternoon. But during all this time every energy of the mind was taxed to the utmost. Memory, calculation, reasoning, analysis of formulæ the most intricate, mastery of subjects the most abstruse, all were called into action, the difficulty certainly not being lessened by being compelled to state your deductions in a language which was not the habitual language of your thoughts; and all this to be done in a struggle for a prize, upon the obtaining of which it is not too much to say, the candidate frequently staked his whole prospects of life. Few trials of mind and nerve and self-possession could, perhaps, be more arduous than this.

appeared sometimes in a very questionable shape. Men, answering abstruse mathematical questions, were not very particular as to the language in which they replied. "*Faciebo squarum*" was long celebrated as the classic formula in which one of the most eminent of modern fellows commenced his solution of a problem proposed to him when a candidate at the examination.

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On one of the days of the examination in the year 18—, there was seen among the groups which were collecting in front of the theatre, a personage in manner and appearance very different from that of one whom such an occasion would naturally attract. A sailor-like and weather-beaten man eyed with a mingled expression of wonder and curiosity the procession in which the Provost and senior fellows, preceded by all the pomp and circumstance of corporate dignity, and followed by the candidates, walked, according to ancient custom, a few minutes before the hour of examination, from the board room to the hall.

He got into conversation with two of the students, enquiring as to the meaning of the procession. "Well," he said, "I had myself a great uncle who was once a fellow of this college. I have often wished to see this place." Some more melancholy recollections seemed brought to his mind, for with the cuff of his rough sailor's coat he hurriedly dashed away a tear that had started to his eye.

There was something in his appearance and manner which interested the two young men, and they proposed to him to come into the hall.

On one of the most remote of the benches of the upper circle the sailor took his seat, and watched with a strange interest a scene so different to any to which he could have been accustomed. The earnest and patient manner of the examiner as he slowly and distinctly enunciated the questions, the impatient efforts of some of the questioned—the cautious and methodical deliberations of others—the countenance fixed and the brow knit, in the effort of concentrated thought—the eye lit up with the flash of intellectual exertion—the various emotions which swept over the features of those who formed the inner circle, appeared to present to him a scene with which, from its novelty, he sympathised more earnestly than many of those who understood all that was going on.

His chief attraction seemed to be in the pale and youthful-looking person—the last but one on the candidates' bench, who was in his answers equalling, if not exceeding, the best of his older and more experienced competitors. There was, indeed, something in Armour's appearance and manner which won for him the sympathies and wishes of the whole audience. The stranger, as he noiselessly stole from the hall, thanked his

young guides : " That is a fine young fellow,—the youngest of them all. I have a boy, gentlemen, who ought now to be about his age—if things had been right, he might have been in this college before this—good evening, gentlemen ;" and under the influence of his emotion, he rapidly walked off before either of them had told him the name or the story of the youthful genius, to whom his sympathies had been attracted.

The day of the declaration of the new fellow, the rough sailor man was once more walking in the front, and in the midst of the academic group, among whom he seemed strangely out of place. A considerable crowd was waiting, as usual, for the appearance of the Provost and senior fellows from the chapel in which they always met for the purposes of the election. At last the doors were opened and as the Provost appeared on the steps he made the announcement, " Mr. Armour is the fellow." An earnest although not noisy clapping of hands from those in his immediate vicinity, testified the satisfaction with which the declaration was received. The intelligence passed in confused murmurs of " Armour is the fellow," to the more distant bystanders, while

his friends thronged round the successful candidate with their congratulations.

"Well, your young friend has won," said one of his acquaintances of the previous day, addressing himself to the sailor, whom he was surprised to meet again.

But the name "Armour" had already reached the mariner's ears. He seemed like one to whom some strange and bewildering sound had come. "Armour, Armour," he said; "did any one say his name was Armour?"

"Yes, his name is Armour," replied the other, astonished at the agitation the sea captain displayed; "do you know anything of him?"

"Where, where is he?" he asked with an expression of countenance in which amazement, and hope, and incredulity were strangely blended.

The newly elected fellow had escaped from the congratulations which were poured upon him from the careless and the insincere. He was walking slowly towards his rooms, leaning on the arm of an attached friend. A host of strangers still followed at a little distance, most of them attracted by curiosity to look upon the man whom fame had already in the course of a few minutes proclaimed one of marvellous genius.

The sailor strode quickly in the direction in which Armour was moving; he came close to him as if afraid to intrude, but the singularity of his manner attracted the attention of the other. They gazed earnestly on each other's faces.

Those who saw those faces brought close to each other, might have read in their lineaments the story. The features of the elder, massive and intelligent, beaten by many a storm, and browned by many a sun—those features suggested far more of toil and physical energy than of thought—but yet their unmistakeable image was reproduced in the pale and study-worn face, the broad and thoughtful brow, the clear and bright eye, which gave so melancholy and at the same time intellectual cast to those of the man of science.

"Is your name Armour, sir?" asked the elder man in a voice of hesitation, while some vague presentiment thrilled through the soul of the younger as he answered, "Yes."

"You came from ——?"

"Your father went to sea?"

He had scarcely waited for affirmative answers to his questions.

One more came in husky and agitated words :

"Your mother?"

"She is well."

"Thank God, MY SON, MY SON," and heedless of the gaze of the crowd which was by this time drawing nearer, father and son were clasped in each other's arms.

* * * *

My readers have no doubt anticipated this discovery. The mysterious interest which attracted the man "whose business was in the deep waters," the tossed of the billows and the storms, to the pale and anxious student, was the strong vibration of some hidden chord of nature, passing unseen from heart to heart. The soul of the father was attracted to his son. These things have often been. Who can tell what subtle associations may evoke those mysterious emotions? There may be some glance unheeded by ourselves, which yet recalls to the memory the images of bygone times, while we take note only of the result. Some smile that had been marked in infancy may have played on the features of the man, and found its way to the heart in which no conscious remembrance of

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it remained. Some glance of the eye like that which once had made glad that father's heart—had power to awaken that old feeling, although itself unrecognised. One of the few things which we do know in that which is called the science of thought is this—that many, very many of the most important of our mental processes are unnoticed by ourselves.* There are intellectual as well as animal pulsations of our nature which beat wholly irrespective of our observation and our will.

“Captain” Armour had not the least reason to expect to meet his son under such circum-

* I do not wish to engage my readers in anything like a metaphysical disquisition, but to those not familiar with such subjects, I may observe that the truth here hinted at is one admitted by all writers. The most familiar illustration of it is the act of reading, an act in which we instantaneously, and unconsciously to ourselves, go through the process of spelling each syllable, and then combining them all into a word. But there are many cases in which that which we consider the judgment even of our sense, is in reality a deduction of our reason. Many things which appear to be the instinctive promptings of our mind, are in truth the conclusions of a long train of reasoning, of which, as well as of the facts which form its links, we do not take the slightest note.

stances. His story may be in part conjectured. The false rumour of his death had been occasioned by his disappearance from the French prison. He had escaped from confinement, managed to get on board an American vessel in the port of Brest, to which he had been carried. He had no power of being very particular in the selection of a destination, and the ship in which, by the connivance of the Captain, he escaped, was bound for the Brazils. He embarked in her as a common sailor. Anxiously, as she traversed the weary wastes of the Atlantic, did he watch for some vessel to which might be entrusted the letters he had written to his wife. But war was still sweeping the ocean with its legalized piracy, and the merchant ships, instead of being dispersed singly over the seas, were gathered into fleets, protected by convoys. The American skipper was not very anxious to be questioned by an armed cruizer as to his intercourse with Brest; and Armour was carried over the Atlantic without any opportunity of communicating with home. The vessel was wrecked on the coast of South America, far from any place which was then the abode of civilized man. These pages are not to be the

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record of the mariner's adventures. Chance at last carried him to India, and in India he met with a friend of his early days, who placed him in a position in which he realised a little money. It was from India that he had sent the letter, the news of which had excited the hopes of his wife. When it reached —, Mrs. Armour had long left it. The old clergyman who knew of her destination, was dead; and the letter, with the remittance which it contained, was returned, after a long interval, to the writer.

Ill health, the result of his hardships and the climate, detained him for a little time. As soon as he was able, he left India and returned home; he visited the town where he had left his wife and son—where he had passed the early years of his life. There were, of course, many to remember and recognise him; but he could gain no tidings of the "widow," who had left in sorrow and poverty more than fifteen years before. He could read, however, her history in the tale which the old man who still kept the lighthouse told him of her visits there each Sunday evening, and of the earnest gaze with which she and her little boy used to peer over the expanse of the sea.

He bent his steps to Dublin as the most likely place to be able successfully to pursue his search. The very day of his arrival he was attracted to wander into the courts by seeing an unusual assemblage of persons at the College gate. The reader knows the rest.

* * * *

The father and the son were restored to each other. The group that had witnessed the strange scene of their meeting, had dispersed, to spread, through those that were still loitering in the courts, the strange rumour that Armour's father had been found. The story was circulated with a thousand exaggerations—while Armour had, with his parent, retired to hide his agitation in the chambers of his friend.

He had not gone to his own. There his mother was waiting, in anxious impatience, the news of the result. She had come there to be at hand, that she might hear it the sooner. The hurried steps of a friend had borne her the good news before she could hear it from the lips of her son.

“How are we to break this to my mother?” asked that son; “this double joy will kill her.”

To endeavour to find an answer to this question they had gone to his friend's rooms instead of proceeding to his own.

But the mother's heart was yearning for her son. "Why comes he not?" she said, like the mother of Sisera—like her, she had looked from the lattice. She saw that he had turned off in an opposite direction, while an apparently excited group was watching, and some of them following his steps. "He is ill, he is ill," was the thought that bounded at her heart. She would not wait for the slow enquiries of her friend. She rushed pale and agitated to the rooms where he had gone—there was but little opportunity of preparing her for meeting with the long-lost husband of her youth.

I was not a witness to that meeting. If I had been, I dare not raise the veil which ought to hide from every stranger's eye its holy privacy. *There* was a joy of the heart with which "a stranger intermeddleth not." What pen, indeed, could describe the scene in which the father, the mother, and the son, the husband and the wife, met under circumstances like these? Into that one hour were crushed all the emotions of a life.

What wild surprise—what remembrances of miseries—what tumultuous bursts of unspeakable joy must have mingled their excitement and their agitations in the heart of each.

What gushings of deep thankfulness welled up from each of these hearts, as it remembered its struggles, its sorrows, and its prayers.

One thing I do know—"The double joy" did not "kill her." No one dies of joy. Years afterwards it was my good fortune, when the young fellow had retired upon one of the best of the College livings, to see his father and mother the happy and honoured inmates of Armour's home—in the venerable parsonage where he resided as the parish minister, dispensing blessings to an attached people. The tempest-tossed mariner found there a peaceful haven. As he sat in the arm-chair, by his son's fireside, a grandchild climbed the old man's knee—a boy in whose eye flashed the intellectual brightness which had marked that of his father's, and his father's sire—as he listened with wonder to the tales of stormy oceans and wild and savage lands, with which the mariner amazed the imagination, and moved the sympathies of the child.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MURDERED FELLOW.

IF the reader, who, like myself, is fond of musing even on the least circumstantial chronicles of the olden time, has ever turned over the pages of the University Calendar, which contain the names of all those who have, since the foundation of the College, attained to the dignity of fellowship—if he has even rapidly glanced from name to name, and thought of all those who once trod successfully the path of academic competition, and were esteemed wise in their generation—while little now remains of their memories, except the mere records which the Calendar preserves—it may be that, amid the multitude of names that crowd the pages, his eye has been caught by a brief and yet a

strange memorandum, appended to the name of Edward Ford ; and his attention has, perhaps, paused for an instant on the melancholy comment which distinguishes, as by a sanguinary mark, that name from those around it—"KILLED BY A SHOT FIRED FROM THE COLLEGE PARK, MARCH, 1734."

Those few words contain the sum and substance of the tale which I am about to narrate.

My tale may well be called one of the olden time. A century—a hundred years—and one beside, have passed away since that deed of blood stained the cloisters of the College.* Three generations of men have gone to that grave to which the hand of violence prematurely sent the murdered fellow ; and many things have since been changed, and opinions that then seemed eternal, unquestioned truths, have been discarded from the minds of men ; and the world is not what it was ; but yet all that I will relate might happen even now. Human nature is not changed : the passions that agitated the minds of our fathers are still rife in the bosoms of their sons ; and wherever or whenever man

* This chapter was originally published March, 1835.

has been found, anger, and love, and revenge, and all the wild and all the softer feelings of our nature are found there too. Every thing, then, reader, that I write has an interest for you. I have gone back a century for my subject; not because I might thus present to you another picture of the human heart; but merely because I have come to the knowledge of strange things that happened then. I have, too, this consolation, that, by fixing on a date so ancient, I shall leave no grounds for the spiteful to gratify their malevolence, by making to living character a personal application of what I say. I shall furnish no plausible pretext for busy and unnatural ingenuity to invent for me allusions that I never dreamed of, and assign to me motives that I never knew. There will be nothing to offend the living in what I write of the men who are long since dead; nor will there be any one to barb and venom the shaft, and direct the poisoned weapon where I had never aimed it, or intended it should fall. In this chapter, at least, I may hope that there will be nothing that malice may misunderstand or malignity misrepresent.

This tale, like my former one, is true. I have determined to permit to myself as little deviation as possible from fact. The reader may naturally feel curious as to the source from which I have derived my circumstantial information as to the foul murder which I am about to relate. I have no hesitation in satisfying this very legitimate curiosity. I have in my possession an old and an authentic document, drawn up by one of the parties implicated. I have no wish to conceal anything—he was a relation of my own. A short time before his death, which happened in 1751, he desired to relieve his mind of the dreadful secret which for sixteen years had been preying upon him ; and he addressed to Archdeacon M—, a near relative of my grandfather, then a young and zealous clergyman, a full and particular account of the entire transaction. This document is now before me : parts of it are perfectly illegible, and all of it is more or less eaten away by the moth and time. I can, however, supply some of the omissions, from memoranda in the Archdeacon's hand-writing. It is not my intention, of course, to publish verbatim the confessions of my unfortunate

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kinsman. Much of what he wrote relates to family matters, which would be unfit to meet the public eye, and in which the public would take very little interest. I shall tell the story in my own words: I shall venture, perhaps, on reflections of my own; but shall be strictly guided by the manuscript as to facts. My kinsman I shall call Wallis; and as the manuscript, of course, tells more of its author than of anyone else, I shall make him the hero of my tale—if I may apply the term to deeds that shewed but little either of the hero or the man. I have been able to collect from other sources some information as to his character that he does not himself supply—I had only to consult the traditions of my own family to know something. His picture is still hanging in the hall of his ancestral home, preserved by its present possessor among the family portraits, which are almost the sole remnants of the fortunes of his house. It has been gazed on and spoken of by many who never knew that the wrinkle on the youthful brow, and the deep furrow on the worn cheek, which the painter has carefully preserved, were traced by the finger of remorse upon the

countenance of a murderer. I have, however, detained the reader long enough by this tedious introduction : it is time for me to commence the narrative—one that will contain but little to amuse, but may, perhaps, something to instruct.

Wallis was heir to a property, which, though not great, was yet considerable ; and neither pains nor expense were spared on his education. His talents were such as gave ample warrant that these were not thrown away ; and his disposition rendered him universally beloved. It was true that there was about him all that darkness of pride which is not inconsistent with generosity of spirit ; but even this lent a deeper shade of interest to his character : a high-souled sense of honour marked all his acts—such he was once. Alas ! guilt can bow the proudest soul to deeds that in the days of its haughtiness it would have scorned. I shall in these pages record acts of his that seem to be marked with the cowardice of the assassin.

At the age of eighteen he became a student of the University. Young, ardent, and thoughtless, he was but little fitted to mix without guidance in the society of College, society,

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where intimacies are contracted before you know the character of your acquaintance, and intimate acquaintances very often imperceptibly become friends. The young heart throws itself open to all the world: it is not until deception has been discovered, until, in the discovery, our feelings are rudely repulsed, that we learn the only lesson the world can teach us—to distrust all in whom we have no special reason to place confidence. This is all that is meant by knowledge of the world. The lesson is a simple one, but yet it is hard to learn. This maxim is the philosophy of experience, and it is not, perhaps, to be learned without the pain of the experiment.

In the course of my narrative, I shall have occasion to introduce my readers to an intimate acquaintance with two other persons, whom I shall designate by the names of Palliser and Browne. Of their characters it may be well to give a sketch; but I trust it is unnecessary for me to repeat that these are not the names which appear in the manuscript from which I draw my information. Inexcusable, indeed, should I be if I were to wound the feelings of those whom personally I respect, by unveiling,

as it were, the secrets of the grave, and placing before the eyes of living relatives, in all the startling individuality of names and circumstances, the crimes of the dead, of which they never have heard, of which, I trust, they never will hear. The real name of the young man whom I call Palliser is one familiar enough to the public. In this city, even while I am inditing his sad history, his relatives are bearing themselves proudly and honourably in society; and far be it from me to affix a stigma to a name to which no disgrace has been ever yet attached. And though I have not been able to trace anything regarding the connections of the extraordinary individual whom I have denominated Browne, I have yet thought it prudent to adopt the same caution with regard to him. This explicit declaration will, I trust, save me from imputations which my last chapter was not fortunate enough to escape.

Browne was a strange and mysterious character. Nobody knew whence he had come, and in College he associated with but few: indeed, for some time he appeared to have neither friend nor acquaintance. He was dull

and gloomy: his talents were admitted by all to be of the very highest order: he was said never to study; and yet not only did he bear away every honour which the regulations of the University then offered to the competition of her sons, but there was no subject in all the varied range of human knowledge in conversing upon which he did not seem perfectly at home. His personal appearance was in perfect keeping with the general singularity of his character. Tall, gaunt and muscular in his frame: his clothes were always so made as to hang loosely about him: his eyes were generally fixed upon the ground, and from this habit he had contracted a stoop, which added to the strangeness of his deportment. His fellow students regarded him almost with the awe with which they would have contemplated a being of another order. His great talents, his singular appearance, his secluded habits, and the strange mystery that seemed to attach itself to everything connected with him, made him the subject of very general remark. It was whispered that his opinions on religion were not the most orthodox in the world; and two students

were found to tell a strange tale, how, one night, they had overheard him in an earnest conversation either with himself or some unseen being, when, with many strange and awful expressions, he avowed himself an atheist.

But my readers will have better opportunities, as my narrative progresses, of judging of the character of this extraordinary man. How Wallis formed his first acquaintance with him I know not. The commencement of his manuscript simply states that he was his most intimate friend: the substance of the sketch of his general character is written upon a separate slip of paper, and left unfinished, as it abruptly terminates in the middle of a sentence. The suspicion has often crossed my mind, that connected with their first acquaintance there may have been circumstances over which it is better that there should be drawn a veil.

The character of Palliser was one in which there was nothing remarkable. He was good-natured, foolish, and dissipated. He was intimate with Wallis long before either of them became acquainted with Browne; and he was the means of leading Wallis away from those paths

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of peace and religion in which his early steps had been taught to walk ; and by bringing him in contact with the contamination of the scenes of youthful vice, he became the unconscious instrument of preparing his moral constitution for the reception of the still more deadly, because the more intellectual poison, that another was soon to infuse.

Alas ! alas ! how easily is the youthful mind led astray, and the youthful affections perverted ! Vice spreads her enchantments in the way—the poison-flowers of her garden look bright and gay—and the scent of death that they bear is stifled in the odour of the perfumes that she strews around—and the passions plead for their indulgence—and crimes in the sight of Heaven are called by the flattering world “youthful follies.” That extenuating epithet has ruined many a one ! Many a young man has drunk deep of the fountain of sin, and absorbed its poison in his frame, until it has mingled with the life-blood of his heart—he starts to find himself a ruined man—and, while the progress of damning depravation has been going on—while feeling after feeling is deadened, and one

generous emotion after another is absorbed in the selfishness of guilt—he has all the while consoled himself with the vain delusion that all his wickedness is no more than youthful folly.

Under the care of a prudent and a pious mother, Wallis had received an early religious education, and even dissipation itself could not erase from his mind the impressions it had left. In the midst of his gay companions, he might set conscience at defiance : but when he left the convivial club, or rose, it might be, from the gambling-table—when he retired to the solitude of his own chamber, and saw on his book-shelf the long unopened Bible—his mother's dying gift—and thought of the earnest look of imploring anxiety that animated into temporary life her pale and ghastly features, as her quivering lips begged from him the promise that he would read *THAT* book ; then he remembered how he had grasped her clammy hand, and told her that he would. And how had that promise been kept ? The question was daggers to his guilty soul ; and often, in agony of mind, did he throw himself upon his bed, give vent to his feelings in bitter sobs, remain awake all night

in forming resolutions of repentance, and rise in the morning again to pursue his wayward course of folly and of guilt.

Browne was a cold, a calculating, sneering sceptic. He had reasoned himself, or he thought he had reasoned himself, into the mad belief of the infidel's creed—if he can be said to have a creed who believes in nothing—and it was not long before he began to exert his specious sophistry upon the too susceptible mind of Wallis, who, it may be imagined, did not find his belief in Christianity a convenient thing. He had long wished it were not true ; and it is an old observation, that what we wish we can easily persuade ourselves to believe. Browne was a man who had thought much, but had thought wrong ; who had studied the mysteries of revelation, not that he might know them, but that he might cavil at them. In the pride of human reason, he had dared to pry into the deep things that reason cannot comprehend, and refused to yield his assent to that which was not plain to his intellect. He had thus a thousand startling difficulties with which to puzzle Wallis's judgment ; a thousand wild speculations with which

to dazzle his imagination. It is unnecessary to go over the arguments by which he overthrew the faith of his more simple-minded companion ; suffice it to say that he at last succeeded : it was not so difficult when that faith was but a reluctant homage to the recollections of the past.

But Wallis, although shaken in his belief, although he had attained sufficient of uncertainty to enable him to still the voice of angry and reproachful conscience, by the hope that all this might not be true, was yet long in throwing off his early faith. It was not without many struggles that he brought himself to acknowledge even to his own mind that he had thrown away all those hopes that early recollections and early associations had entwined round his heart. It is one thing to doubt, but it is another thing to disbelieve. It may be questioned if any one really disbelieves.—But enough of my own reflections.

* * * *

ONE evening, some months after his first acquaintance with Browne, Wallis was in the rooms of his friend. They were standing together at the window of the apartment, and gazing

out upon the sky—a clear but not a cloudless sky. White vapoury clouds were scattered over the blue of the heaven, and the moon was abroad—a large full moon, “the faithful witness in Heaven,” telling, as it were, of the power of that Being who had made the glories of creation. But her testimony, silent and yet powerful, was unheeded by the two who looked upon her soft light—they were reasoning on the probabilities of the being of a Creator! One would think that to gaze upon the beauties of a clear and moonlight night, and feel the soft and soothing influence of that calm and holy radiance, there need be no reasoning on the matter—the being of the Almighty were then a thing to be felt, not reasoned on—and yet so it was. The heart may be so hardened that it becomes insensible to all the influences of creation, and knows not the sensations they are calculated to awake.

Browne and Wallis reasoned long and earnestly. Wallis still seemed to cling with a despairing tenacity to the last fragments of his shipwrecked faith. But his better judgment was overborne by the delusive sophistries which were advanced by his powerful opponent. Wallis

felt himself overcome in argument, but yet he was hardly convinced ; he could hardly bring himself to believe that all that he had been accustomed to revere was but a delusion. There was a pause in their conversation—Wallis pressed his hand thoughtfully across his brow, and the struggle was for a moment in his mind between the lingering principle of religion, and the dark and sullen demon of infidelity. He said nothing ; Browne broke the silence.

“ Wallis, this is childish, cowardly superstition. Your reason is convinced, and yet your prejudices resist. Ah,” continued he bitterly, “ how it lowers my opinion of human intellect when I see a man of your mind bowing down in senseless slavery to old wives’ tales !”

Wallis was silent. He felt ashamed of his belief : he cowered before the assumed superiority of the daring infidel beside him : he felt, for the first time, the name of Christian a degradation.

Browne laid his hand upon his arm : he trembled with agitation. “ Ah,” said his tempter, “ thus ever to be scared by shadows, and mocked by dreams !” He looked full in his face, as if

to read his thoughts: he then turned away his eye, and, in an under-tone, he said, as if he did not mean his observation for Wallis's ear—"What a pity! a noble intellect the slave of superstition!"

Wallis overheard it. "I am no slave," said he, loudly.

"Not, my dear friend, except of your early prejudices."

"Prejudices!" said Wallace earnestly.

"Yes, prejudices," replied the other. Again he grasped the arm which he had let go: his voice fell to a deep and solemn tone, and, fixing his piercing eyes once more upon Wallis, he said—"Answer me candidly—be a man. Do you believe in that which priests call revelation?"

There was a sneer in his manner. Wallis felt the blood mantling his cheek. "Not a word of it," was his quick and short reply.

He hardly knew what he said. He turned again to the sky, and there was the same soft blue tint upon which, in earlier days, he had loved to gaze and think that there was Deity above it. He felt as if he had flung from him the charter of all his hopes. The blood chilled

at his heart; but he thought it was too late to retract. He grasped the hand of Browne, and, with a voice the echoes of whose loud tones rang from the walls of the chamber, he cried out, "Yes, now I am AN INFIDEL!"

He looked on Browne as if expecting his approbation of his courage. The moonlight fell full upon the pale and stern features of his friend. Wallis fancied that a sardonic smile of fiendish satisfaction played upon his lips; his eyes, too, seemed to glare with an almost unearthly fire. Wallis groaned. The words, "I am his victim," were choking in his throat, but he dared not give them utterance; he felt as if some spell was binding him to the being for whom he had cast off his Maker; to borrow his own expressive words—"I felt as if that gloomy spirit had cast its shadow over my soul. Alas!" added he, nearly fifteen years from that evening, "alas! I have walked in the darkness of that shadow ever since."

I must hurry over many scenes and incidents which the unhappy man's manuscripts detail. He had avowed himself an infidel; and, though conscience often whispered to him the duty of

inquiry, he dared not trust himself to examine ; he feared that he might find it all true, and then—what hope for him ? he rested on his false security—he felt it false—but still he was content so to rest.

Browne, with all his infidel opinions, had been unexceptionable in his conduct ; and, as if by some strange retributive allotment, it was reserved for Wallis to bring him into scenes of vice, from which, hitherto, a natural sense of right—for there is such a thing—had apparently restrained him. And Wallis did so ; and all that high and haughty morality upon which the infidel had prided himself was broken down before the force of the temptations with which he was brought in contact—and his philosophical love of virtue withered before the blighting influence of the impurities of dissipation. And he who but a little while before had sneered at the restraints of religion as a useless thing, and boasted that intellect and the natural virtue of the soul were far more powerful to keep man in the paths of right than all the tales that priests had ever framed—became a practical example of the falsehood of his trust ; and by many an

act, which even he felt to be a degradation, gave his wicked and presumptuous philosophy the lie.

I have already hinted that Wallis had been drawn into the accursed fascinations of the gambling table. Palliser, who had been his senior in vice, was his guide into all the mysteries of its iniquity; and now again Wallis performed the same kind office for his less initiated friend—and the fascinations of gambling, powerful as they were to the first two, seemed even to them to exercise a terrible influence over the mind of Browne. He seemed to live but in the excitement of the hazard; when seated at the table of chance, his eyes would flash with almost supernatural fire, and he seemed to watch the alterations of luck with a kind of maniac glee that even to his companions was appalling; his voice was loudest at the table, and his bets and his play the wildest, and yet he seldom lost; gambling seemed his element, and he was at home in it.

Palliser, and Wallis, and Browne, now formed a union of vice and wickedness—they were inseparable companions. Palliser, who had not

intellect to perceive even the difficulties of religion, became an infidel, merely because he thought it a fine thing to be so, and yet he was foremost in gross and blasphemous ridicule of all the mysteries of our faith. These three wretched madmen formed themselves into a knot, the principles of which were, that they believed in no religion. I will not shock my Christian readers by even hinting at the blasphemies of which they were guilty, or how they turned into bitter ridicule all that we believe in : as if to leave no wickedness unattempted, they adopted as the designation of their unholy compact a name that might profane some of the deepest mysteries of truth.

And they were all miserable. Palliser was a sensualist; Wallis could not but remember with bitterness the days of peace that were long gone by; and Browne, at times to Wallis, cursed the infatuation that had made him "cast off," as he said himself, "the robe of spotless and of proud morality in which he had arrayed himself. I was raised above mankind in being moral without religion," he used to cry, "and now I am on a level with the basest ;" and then

he would clench his fist and gnash his teeth, and curse the hour when he had been led into vice.

And Wallis! he had a deeper cause of remorse—a sharper sting was piercing his breast. Wounded pride drove Browne almost to madness; his proud spirit could not bear the consciousness that he had fallen. But Wallis! love, violated love—the remorse of an early, but, alas! a neglected attachment, added poison to all the pangs of conscience. Wallis had been, even in his childhood, betrothed to an only cousin, the inmate of his father's house. Left an orphan in her infancy, she was adopted by her uncle, whose fond heart designed her as the bride of his only son; and the children had grown up together, and had learned to love instinctively; and their innocent hearts twined together all their hopes and wishes, like the wild flowers which they used, in their childish sport, to weave into chaplets. Wallis, when he grew up, began to be conscious that he entertained more than a sister's attachment for her who had been as a sister to his childhood; and they understood each other; and without any

formal pledge or vow, or any other of those plighted engagements of which novelists are so fond, Wallis knew that his cousin Ellen loved him, and Ellen trusted that Wallis would never forget her.

He was ill at rest with the guilt of this violated attachment resting on his soul. When he read the warm letters which this affectionate girl used to send him, he felt a bitterness that none but those who have done like him, may know; and when he sat down to answer them, he knew himself a hypocrite. He told all his feelings to Browne. Browne seemed to enter into them, but while he professed that he appreciated all the tender influences that early recollections could throw upon the mind; and while he admired the loveliness of virtue, he still sneered at that without which virtue is but an unsubstantial form—a delusion—a phantom—a misty vapour, hanging in some fantastic shape, and mimicking reality until the scorching rays of some powerful temptation melt its beautiful, but flimsy proportions into nothing.

Wallis could not help remarking the change which came over Browne; he was dark and

sullen, and his quick eye rolled with a restless agitation. He abstracted himself from the pursuits of gambling, in which but a little while ago all his energies seemed absorbed. He would absent himself for days together, and no one could tell where he spent his time. Sometimes he would go away at nightfall, and return early in the morning, worn, haggard, and dripping with rain, as if he had passed the night unsheltered from the inclemency of the weather. On one occasion he confessed that he had done so. Wallis asked him for what purpose? He shook his head, and answered—"Do not ask me; there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in *your* philosophy." He laid the emphasis upon the word *your*.

"And on what philosophy, may I ask," said Wallis, "have you been lately fortunate enough to hit? But I must declare, that, with all my respect for you, if your discipline be to wander about of a cold, wet night, I shall never become one of your disciples."

"No!" replied Browne, sternly; "I shall never ask you; you have neither mental nor physical energies to meet what I do: my philo-

sophical studies," added he, significantly, "have other companions than such as you."

There was scorn in the last words that Wallis could ill have brooked, were it not that the manner of Browne had created in his mind serious apprehensions as to the soundness of his intellect; he wished to speak to him, but he had rushed from the room.

It was about three weeks from the period of this interview that Wallis was surprised by the entrance of Browne, whom, during the whole of that interval, he had never seen, and for whose safety he began to be considerably alarmed. He seemed to be in bad spirits; he shook Wallis cordially by the hand, and, drawing a chair closer to the table, he leaned his head upon it, covering his face with his hands.

"Wallis," said he, "unless you and Palliser will help to save me, I am a ruined man."

"What can we do for you?" eagerly said Wallis.

"I will tell you all," said Browne, resuming his erect position. "You have, probably," continued he, "wondered at my absence for the

last three weeks. I was called away to settle some business for my father."

"This was the first time that ever Browne had alluded to any of his family.

"Yes, to save my father from a gaol. To-morrow a thousand pounds must be paid in Dublin, or my father, my poor old father, goes to gaol; and I know it will be his death."

Browne paused—his lips assumed an ashy hue—and he trembled all over. Wallis pitied him; he moved his lips to speak; he loved Browne, for the first time, for the feeling he displayed. Browne waved his hand. "Hear me out, hear me out. By great exertions I raised the required sum; I came to town, exulting in my success, last night—and last night a villain robbed me of it."

Again his agitation obliged him to pause; his breathing became quick; but he recovered self-possession, and proceeded.

"Yes, a villain—a friend;" and he laid a bitter emphasis on the latter word—"a friend robbed me. I travelled up with a relation who knew I had the money, and the purpose too. He made me drink, and while in a state of

intoxication, he made me gamble, and I lost it all."

Browne went through this recital with calmness; he folded his arms and looked Wallis full in the face. Wallis was all indignation. "By —," said he, "he *shall* not keep your money. Tell me where he is, and if I was to be hanged for it to-morrow, I will take it from him."

"Hush," said Browne, "I have a better plan than that. I left him as day dawned this morning: I have seen him since, and I told him that this evening I would bring him two pigeons; and he is to play again."

"And who are the pigeons?" said Wallis.

"You and Palliser. But do not start—you shan't be pigeoned. I have invented"—and as he spoke, he slowly drew a pack of cards from his pocket—"I have invented, after this morning's study, an artifice by which, if four play, three can, without the slightest danger of detection, play into each other's hand, and infallibly win from one. Now," continued he, "I will teach you and Palliser this artifice. Come, and personate pigeons, and I must recover my thousand pounds. I would not win *his* money by

such means ; but that money was mine, is mine —no, I am wrong ; it is my poor old father's."

Wallis described himself as being under a spell, in the presence of Browne, from that fatal hour when, at his bidding, he had renounced his faith in God. When Browne spoke, his perceptions of right and wrong seemed to become confused ; and as he himself expressed it in his manuscript, "some terrible fascination bound him as if to do the behests of a dark spirit, to whom his soul was given up." The enormity of the proposal that he should, under any circumstances, or for any purpose, engage in a scheme to cheat at cards, did not strike him in all its hideousness. Scruples, indeed, he had, but under the influence of Browne they were overruled—Palliser's assent was readily procured. Browne's ingenious artifice appeared to Wallis infallible. They had, indeed, a little difficulty in making Palliser comprehend it ; but, after a few hours' training, he became expert enough in the part he had to take. It was settled that they were to meet Browne in the evening, and accompany him on what they per-

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suaded themselves was an errand of justice and mercy.

As a last tribute to his scruples Wallis stipulated that when this artifice had accomplished its end—when Browne's money was won back—he should be at liberty then to tell the object of it how they had used that artifice for the purpose of extorting from him his dishonest gains.

* * * *

It was a March evening when the three friends sallied forth, like tigers prowling for their prey. As they proceeded, Browne reminded them of the part they had to act; that the proposal for play would be as if accidentally introduced, and that they were to appear careless and indifferent, and conjured them, by their regard for him, to play carefully, and not forget the trick. He seemed to exult in the prospect of meeting the cheat with weapons of his own.

The way they had to go was longer than either Wallis or Palliser had expected. They struck off the high road, and went along a pathway that led through the fields. Palliser complained of nothing but the length of the distance; Browne led on in sullen silence; and Wallis was

left to his own reflections, interrupted by nothing but Palliser's occasional curses, as proceeding in an indolent jog-trot he might happen to strike his foot against a stone. He did not feel comfortable as to the errand on which he was going. He had cast off the restraints of religion—he had plunged into much of profligacy and vice ; but until now he had never ventured on any act that bordered on the dishonourable, and he could not suppress the rising and bitter sensation that he was taking another step away from the innocence and happiness, to return to which he so often and so earnestly longed. But he quieted his conscience by the specious argument, that he was only assisting an injured man to recover his right ;—it is only religion that can really elevate morality above the maxim, that the end justifies the means.

At last, they reached the termination of their walk. A lonely cottage stood surrounded by a little courtyard, enclosed by a low brick wall. A few old trees grew inside, whose large boughs were rustling in the hoarse wind. Browne raised up the latch of a little wicket gate, and they all entered. The open space between the wall and

the cottage, as well as they could see in the dusky twilight, had once been a garden, but it was now choked up with weeds and grass: the windows had been broken, and the place of the shattered panes was supplied by boards. Browne took a latch-key from his pocket, and opened the door; he showed his two companions into a room that opened almost immediately off the entrance; a cheerful fire blazed in the grate, and the apartment, though scantily, was neatly furnished. An old woman presently appeared, and lit two candles which stood upon the table. As she did so, the light fell full upon her features, and discovered certainly an extraordinary appearance. If her years were to be told by the number of wrinkles on her face, her age had far exceeded the usual limits of human life. There was something, however, extraordinary in her looks: there seemed an expression of malignity to rest upon her countenance, which was not softened even by the long gray hairs that had disengaged themselves from a handkerchief with which she had tied them up, and hung loosely about her cheeks. She eyed the two strangers

with a most scrutinizing glance, shook her head, but said nothing.

"Is he come yet, Mary?" asked Browne eagerly.

"No," replied the sybil, and walked out of the room.

All this was very strange to Palliser and Wallis: their astonishment was, however, still more increased when they saw Browne, with the air of one who was perfectly at home, open a cupboard, which was fixed in a recess of the wall, and bringing out some glasses and some bottles of wine, set them before them. His two guests looked at each other in mute amazement. At last Wallis ventured to hint that he seemed perfectly at home. Browne put his finger on his lip: "My dear friends," said he, "you are now my guests; but, while you are here, you must ask no questions. When we are going home, I will explain everything."

Their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of their expected companion, who was ushered into the room by the same old woman whom they had seen on their first arrival. Browne introduced him under the name of Cole-

ridge. He took his seat at the table, and joined in their conversation. Wallis could not help suspecting that all was not right. The countenance of the stranger was too open and ingenuous for that of a practised gambler. Strange suspicions crossed his mind, and once or twice he felt inclined to feign illness, and return home. At last Browne proposed that they should play, and the look which passed between him and Coleridge, as the latter lisped out an apparently careless assent, satisfied Wallis that everything was as he had represented it ; and he entered on the game with all the pleasure which we naturally feel in the prospect of outdoing the manœuvres of those who attempt to overreach ourselves.

They began to play for moderate stakes, and Browne arranged that success should have its alternations. Gradually the excitement of their victim increased ; he swallowed down his wine with a more eager zest, glass after glass, as if to quench the thirst of his soul. The stakes became larger, and Coleridge's eye glared as pool after pool was decided against him. Palliser and Wallis were quite cool ; they took no interest in the game, and Wallis was principally

occupied in watching the agitation of countenance displayed by Coleridge and Browne, as the shades of dark passions flitted across their features. The plan was completely successful : stake after stake was swept into the pocket of some one of the three friends ; and Coleridge, in a frenzy, began to curse his ill luck ; but he began at the same time to play with the recklessness of desperation. The stakes were doubled, as Browne sarcastically observed, that he might have a chance of repairing his losses. They were trebled, and quadrupled, with the same praiseworthy object ; and, as each time this object failed, Browne indulged in the most pathetic condolence with his friend on the tremendous run of ill luck which he had.

“I believe,” said he, “Coleridge, you have not won a pool to-night.”

Coleridge made him no answer ; his eyes were fixed, with a half wild, half stupid stare ; his fist was clenched with convulsive violence, and large drops of perspiration were trickling down his cheeks ; his hand was resting on the clasp of a purse, that seemed almost exhausted of its contents : he swallowed down a larger draught

of wine, and, mastering his agitation, said, calmly—

“Gentlemen, I have lost six hundred pounds, and I have four left behind”—he threw down a hundred pound note on the table—“who will take up that?”

“I will,” cried Browne.

“And I,” said Palliser.

“And I will not,” said Wallis, who had been earnestly watching the agony of Coleridge.

Browne cast on him a fiendish glance of indignation. “Pretty conduct this,” said he, almost choking with rage; “you have won this gentleman’s money, and it is dishonourable in you now to refuse to play.”

Wallis felt his anger rise; he was strongly tempted to reveal the whole plot; but Browne’s eye was fixed full upon him, and Wallis trembled beneath its stare. The play proceeded, and both Browne and Palliser won from Coleridge—he paid the two hundred pounds, and produced two hundred more—his lips became livid, and he bit the under-one so furiously that the blood gushed out. “Here,” he cried, or

rather yelled, "have at you, by —— it is my last!"

Browne and Palliser were deprived, by Wallis's withdrawal, of any assistance from their plan—and the transaction was, therefore, what a gambler would call fair. Wallis hoped that Coleridge would win—but no! once more he lost, and Palliser and Browne each coolly took up their hundred pounds, and deposited the notes in their waistcoat pockets.

Coleridge bit his lips more furiously than ever—his features became deadly pale—revenge and despair struggled for pre-eminence in the expression of his face—he looked towards Browne—he attempted to speak, but he was choking—at last the words "traitor! villain!" burst from him. Browne folded his arms, and looked calmly at him: he appeared not to heed the opprobrious epithets, but a sneer of mingled contempt and savage satisfaction played upon his lips.

"Well, Sir!" said he coolly.

Coleridge laughed hysterically—"Villain!" said he again, "are these the pigeons that you told me of?"

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Palliser laughed, and rubbed his hands with glee. "Pigeons, indeed," said he. Coleridge became absolutely frantic—he leaped across the table with a scream, and attempted to grasp Browne's throat. Palliser, who was strong and muscular, interposed, and by one blow of his arm, repelled the violence of his assault.

"Bear your losses like a man!" said he, "or by my faith——"

"Losses," cried the other, interrupting him. "My ruin—my damnation—ruffians! swindlers! you have robbed me; and the curse of a ruined soul be with you all, and the blood of a murdered man be on your heads to all eternity!"

His voice, trembling with passion, gave a terrible effect to his awful imprecation: scarcely had he pronounced it, when, like a maniac, he rushed from the room; they heard the furious bang of the outside door as he left the house, but it was not until the last faint echoes of his retiring steps died away in the silence of the night, that any one ventured to comment on the scene.

Wallis was the first to speak; he rose from

the seat where for some time he had been sitting a silent observer of the proceedings.

"Browne," said he solemnly, "you have deceived me."

"How?"

"That agony was not the grief of one who had merely lost what he had unjustly won."

"Tut!" replied Browne, "the fellow was drunk;" and he held up an empty bottle which stood close to Coleridge's vacant place, as corroborative evidence of what he said. "I know the man well; he is, when sober, a cool, hardened villain, but when he drinks, he does not know what he says or does."

But Wallis was *not* satisfied. With a desperate effort at emancipation from the spell, he rushed from the room and the house—He called wildly after the departing victim of this fraud. He fancied he heard his steps before him, and rushed onward in their direction. He shouted the name of "Coleridge," until his voice seemed to die away in the sough of the night wind. There was no answer, and when the echoes of his cry had subsided, all was still, but the playing of the breeze in the branches

over his head, and the gentle rippling of a little stream, that ran purling close at hand.

He pressed his head convulsively, like one awaking from some hideous dream. A hand was on his shoulder, Browne stood beside him.

"Do not," he said, "be imposed on by that scoundrel, you heard him confess he came here to rob you."

Wallis permitted him to lead him back unresisting, to the room he had left. Decanters of spirits stood upon the table, beside or among the instruments of their gambling. Palliser was emptying the contents of one, Wallis followed his example, and gulped down a huge draught of brandy, scarcely diluted by the small quantity of water with which he mixed it. Palliser poured half-drunken congratulations upon Browne.

"Well, that fellow found us queer pigeons after all—eh ! eh ! eh !" and he laughed heartily at the notion of the cheat being outwitted. Browne did not, however, enter into his merriment ; a sudden change came over his mood ; he was silent and thoughtful.

"Well, Browne," resumed Palliser, no way

disheartened or discouraged by the apparent insensibility of the person upon whom he was lavishing his mirth, "you were a deuced clever fellow to invent that plan, and stupid as I was, I did not make many mistakes, after all."

Browne took out his watch ; the night was nearly spent, and the party were all astonished by his intimation that, by the time they would reach the College, the gates would be opened in the morning. None of them were novices at gambling ; they had all seen many a morning sun throw in his fresh and pure beams through the newly-opened window, on the wan and worn countenances of the gambling party, just separating from the avocations in which they had consumed the night ; but now there was something strange in the announcement that time had sped so rapidly over their infernal employment. Wallis felt his heart sicken, as he thought that another night so spent had flown on to that eternity, where all his scepticism could not persuade him there was nothing to register its message. He was glad when they left the close atmosphere of the apartment in which they had been sitting ; and when he felt

once more the cold but bracing night breeze on his cheek, there was, as it were, a purity in its breath—and corrupted as his heart was, it hailed the sensation with delight. The soul was weary of its own pollution.

Next day, a porter brought Wallis a message from the dean, requiring his immediate presence before him. He might naturally have supposed that it was merely the usual summons to account for his absence from night roll on the preceding night: but “conscience doth make cowards of us all.” Wallis felt afraid, he knew not of what; he trembled as he obeyed the message, and his heart sank within him, as he approached the chambers of Edward Ford, the stern and almost stoical disciplinarian who then filled the office of dean.

From this ill-fated gentleman’s sad end my chapter has taken its name, and yet this is the first time since I commenced the narrative that I have mentioned his name. I may, perhaps, then, here pause to present a sketch of his character, some knowledge of which, indeed, is necessary to the reader. He had not at this time been long a fellow; four years, I think,

was the period, and yet he was more respected than many who were his seniors. His manners were rough, and his attachment to discipline was carried to an extreme, that even gave to his personal intercourse with the students an appearance of haughtiness, of which the reality was very foreign to his nature. He was a sincerely pious man, and in everything he endeavoured to conform his conduct to the strictest rule of principle ; no wonder then that he was deemed eccentric. But there were other things in his demeanor that laid him open to the charge. Simple in all his habits, he expended on himself no more than was sufficient to supply his reasonable wants—he was called stingy : out of his revenue he supported a widowed mother and two sisters, who, but for him, would have been almost destitute—and never was his ear or his purse closed to the tale of distress. •He perhaps carried his simplicity too far—but if he did, it was on principle. Even in his conversation, there was a quaintness that bordered on affectation ; in his dress, too, there was a negligence that was very like the negligence of design. But these were eccentricities ; his chief

fault was, that he could not make allowance for the faults of others. Of a temperament naturally cold, he had but little experience of the constitutional temptations to which others might be exposed, and this made him unforgiving and rigid in his cognizance of offence. Like Cato of old, he might have said, "*Qui nihil nullius unquam delicti gratiam fecissem haud facile alterius lubrici malefacta condonabam.*" He was not, it may be presumed, popular as dean—perhaps he did not deserve to be so. The students attributed to natural severity of disposition that which some of their superiors were not ashamed to call his "plaguy conscientiousness." By many he was disliked—by many he was misunderstood; but I have said enough to enable the intelligent reader to fill up the outline of his character from what will follow.

* * * *

When Wallis was ushered into the presence of the dean, he was surprised to find there before him his two associates of the previous night; they appeared to have been waiting for him; they were seated on a deal form at the

lower end of the room, of which the whole furniture consisted of this same deal form, an oak table in the centre, a few chairs of the same material, and an old-fashioned bookcase; the fire-place was without either fender or fire-irons, and a cheerful fire in the grate was the only thing that gave the room the appearance of comfort—all else was dreary and cold-looking, and the windows opening upon the park gave a prospect of a dismal shower driving by. The dean stood upon the hearthstone; he had a paper, apparently a letter, in his hand. As soon as Wallis entered, he motioned him to a seat on the form beside Browne and Palliser, and advancing towards them he handed Wallis the letter, and desired him to read it aloud. Wallis did so—at least, he attempted it—but, before he had proceeded many lines, he began to comprehend its import, and his utterance failed him. It was a letter of accusation from Coleridge—it detailed, with damning minuteness, all the events of the night before, and concluded by declaring that the writer, driven to desperation by the loss of such a sum, which was not his own, had resolved upon leaving an existence

he could not bear ; but imprecated the vengeance of a dying man upon the three who had defrauded him—their names were there. Wallis shook all over—Had it come to this ? was he disgraced—exposed ? He glanced to the end, but he could not read the words of his own condemnation ; his throat became, as it were, tight, and denied his voice a passage ; he felt the veins of his temple swell, as if to bursting ; and his eye-balls, as it were, enlarged to an unnatural size. The dean remarked his emotion ; he coolly took the document from his hand ; “ Young man, I do not wonder—I will spare your feelings, and will finish the reading of this letter.” He read it through, with a clear unfaltering voice ; he laid an emphasis upon each word of bitter accusation, and when he had concluded, he returned it in silence to his pocket. Then turning away without a word of comment, he walked towards the window. The three criminals looked at each other in astonishment. Ford, after some time, turned round and said, “ My first duty, gentlemen, is to inform you, that to-morrow I must lay this letter before the board.”

"It is a forgery!" cried Browne.

"I fervently hope it is so," replied the dean;
"are the contents true?"

He came close to Browne, and looked with earnestness in his face, as if he was eagerly expecting his answer.

Browne turned deadly pale—"May I look at the writing?" he faltered.

The dean handed it to him; he rose in a rage, and tore the paper to atoms; and rushing towards the fire, he flung the fragments in the fire. "It is a lie!" exclaimed he, "there was no fraud."

"Then, sir, you were gambling," replied the dean, in a voice whose sternness indicated a temper no way ruffled by the rude destruction of the document.

Browne made no answer; he folded his arms, and looked sullenly on the ground.

"Wallis," said the dean, "were you gambling?"

"I was," was the steady, the unhesitating reply.

"Was all fair?" was the next tremendous interrogatory.

There was no answer. Wallis knew not what to say; Browne carelessly said, "Perfectly." The dean repeated his question again, addressing himself to Wallis.

"It was not," he answered; "we cheated—we swindled—we were rogues"—he added vehemently, "and that letter damns us as murderers."

He started from his seat; he forgot where he was. "Yes," he added, "his curse: the blood of a ruined soul upon our heads, is ringing still in my ears."

Browne here interrupted: "Mr. Ford," said he solemnly, "whatever blame there is in this transaction belongs to me, and to me alone;" and he went over all the story of himself being cheated by Coleridge, and declared that his two companions had been drawn into it from a desire to aid him in recovering what he had unjustly lost. "As for the letter," added he, "which in a moment of thoughtlessness I destroyed—and pardon me, sir, for my violence—I know it to be a lie; the ruffian who wrote it is now upon his way to America; and he sent it but with the fiendish desire of destroying us."

He uttered these words with an appearance of ingenuousness that had its effect with everybody present. Even the dean's rigid features relaxed for a moment—it was but for a moment—he gathered again his brow into the same dark frown that had originally rested on it, and said coldly—

“Young man, I am not to be your judge : it is not for me to excuse your companions, because they have been led into crime by you—you will be prepared with your defence before the board to-morrow. As for the document,” added he, “which you destroyed, it is of no consequence—the board will take my word for its contents.”

Wallis had since he spoke been standing in the niche of the window, looking out on the shower of sleet that was driving rapidly across the park ; but he heeded not anything but the bitter thoughts that were rushing across his own mind. The last words of the dean came like daggers to his heart—prepare for his defence before the board ! in other words, prepare for an ignominious expulsion : and how would this be felt by an aged and a loving father, who

fondly dreamed that his son had never entered on the dark career of vice? Other recollections, too, arose—he thought of her whom he still loved; of hopes that even in his darkest hours of sin had flitted before him, speaking of the time when he should yet be virtuous and happy. All was now at an end! To-morrow, a disgraced man, he would be marked with the ban of vice; he would be branded as a hypocrite to the father from whom he had long concealed his faults; he would be seen as he was—worse than he was—by her he loved best! There was madness in the thought. He turned wildly towards the dean—

“Mr. Ford,” he cried, “do you seek our ruin? If you represent this matter to the board, we are ruined—our character is destroyed—our prospects are blighted—will you,” cried he, and with almost a madman’s energy he grasped the hand of the astonished dean—“will you destroy us? will you drive us into recklessness, and consign us, body and soul, to the devil?”

The dean rapidly withdrew his hand, and Wallis fancied that he shrank from the conta-

mination of a gambler's touch. He gave him no time to answer—"For God's sake, sir, think—you may have our ruin to answer for."

"Stop," cried the dean, who had now recovered his self-possession. "Stop this mode of entreaty—it is useless. I shall do my duty; and to God, not me, you must look for relief from the consequences of your crime."

Wallis flung himself on his knees before the obdurate man—"In the name of that Being whom you profess to worship, and who loves mercy, punish us as you please; but oh, save us the disgrace of a public declaration of our guilt! I have a father—an old father—it will break his heart."

He remained in the posture of supplication—"Kneel to your Maker," said the dean, "and ask his forgiveness. I have nothing to forgive you—but be the consequences what they may, I must do my duty. Gentlemen, you may withdraw."

Wallis rose from his knees—mad with desperation, he cursed the dean; the latter peremptorily ordered him from his presence; he was

not slow to obey ; and a few minutes more saw them all assembled in Palliser's room.

The fever of Wallis's mind had not subsided ; he stamped upon the floor ; he upbraided Browne with having led them into this. Browne coldly listened both to his bitter invective and to the less refined reproaches of Palliser ; his cheek alone was unflushed ; the sardonic sneer was still upon his lip ; and his grey eye was quick, piercing, and restless as ever. He seemed to wait until Wallis's fury should expend itself ; when it had done so, he addressed him.

"Wallis, it is useless to talk of what is past. I wish I had borne my own fate, and not involved you, my two only friends, in the punishment of my indiscretion, but this cannot be undone—and Ford! he is inflexible. I thought, I hoped, Wallis, when I saw your pride stoop to bend the knee that it would not be in vain—but the savage only enjoyed your abject humiliation."

He paused, and the rising flush of wounded pride became scarlet on the face of the person he addressed.

"We shall all be expelled," cried Palliser.

Wallis groaned.

"Have we not the heart to save ourselves by some daring act?" asked Browne in a voice that fell to a deep and solemn whisper.

"I do not understand you," said Wallis eagerly.

"If to-morrow's sun shall find Ford a living man, our doom is sealed."

The suggestion was plain enough. Wallis and Palliser started—the latter smiled.

"Gentlemen," continued Browne, "it is come to this—it"—and they all knew what he meant by that dreadful "it"—"It must be done in self-defence—the letter is destroyed—and we can silence the only evidence that now remains—dare you do this, Wallis?"

There was a low and hollow sound in the utterance of these words—his eye was fixed on Wallis with a glare. The other cowered once more under the glance. A silence of some seconds seemed to give significance to the terrible words that had been spoken. Wallis at last tried to laugh off their import.

"I dare do anything," he said, half gaily—"but this is nonsense."

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But it was manifest the words were spoken seriously. The suggestions were made in language still more distinct. Palliser's rooms were never without the fatal appliances of drink. The draught which had silenced conscience the night before was swallowed now with the effect of maddening his brain. The diabolical suggestion of the tempter came in dizzy confusion through his mind. He had just power enough of reasoning left to reason himself into crime. It was not so very terrible after all. If his belief were true, what was it but to dissolve a little sooner the perishing materials that were combined into the machine called man? I borrow again his own words. "The spell was upon him—he surrendered himself to the evil one." The counsels of that dark conspiracy it were profitless to detail. Suffice it to say, that the three solemnly pledged themselves that to-morrow's sun should NOT see Ford a living man.

Their plans were soon arranged—the windows of Ford's rooms opened on the park, and so did Palliser's. The chambers of the latter were on the ground floor, and they settled that as

soon as the darkness should cover their murderous design, they should thus get into the park, and concealing themselves in a clump of under-wood, which was directly opposite to the dean's apartments, wait their opportunity of catching a view of his person through the unshuttered windows. A fowling-piece which Palliser had a long time concealed in his chamber, was to be the instrument of their crime.

The night was dark and blustery—such a night as often occurs in the beginning of the month which the old proverb tells us “comes in like a lion.” Cold, watery clouds were driven by a north-west wind across the sky, and showers of chill rain and sleet followed each other in rapid succession. Between the showers a few stars peeped out dully from amid the masses of cloud that rolled on or were scattered in thinner fragments by the gale. In a clump of hollies and other evergreens, which at that time stood tangled and neglected where now the smooth gravel walk runs down the centre of the park, the three murderers concealed themselves. Browne carried the fowling-piece ;

he wrapped the lock in his cloak, to prevent the damp shower reaching it.

The place of their concealment was not more than twenty yards from the windows of the dean: a flickering light was thrown by the blaze of the fire through them; but they could see no figure inside. They watched until their hands became numb from the cold, and they almost feared they were disappointed. At last, a figure approached the window, and raised the sash: it was the dean. He had raised the sash, and his eye appeared to be intently fixed upon a solitary star, that twinkled upon a little patch of blue sky; he folded his arms, and looked steadily upon it. Browne raised the gun, and took a sure and steady aim: his hand was on the trigger, and Wallis felt his heart rising to his mouth as he awaited the sound of the murderous report. Browne lowered the piece. "My hands," said he, "are quite numb; I shall miss him."

He gave the gun to Wallis. Wallis took it, but his hand trembled; he could not take aim. They were near enough to hear the voice of Ford, as he addressed a strange soliloquy to the

little star upon which he gazed. Poor man! this was one of the eccentricities that the world did not understand.

"Emblem of a calm and virtuous mind, shining through the tempest that blows across the heaven with a heedless and a steady light—"

He paused, and, looking round, he repeated—

"Stellis acies obtusa videtur."

"Fire," whispered Browne, "or he will be gone." Wallis raised the gun, and he felt that he had his victim covered. "Quick," said Browne. He hardly knew what he did: he saw that the window was lowering; he knew not by whom; everything was swimming, but he had pulled the trigger; the report echoed fearfully through the night air; there was a scream of pain and terror, and Wallis knew not where he was until he found himself running with his two companions towards the windows of Palliser's rooms.

They stood in those rooms, breathless and silent. Wallis faintly dragged the fowling-piece. No one spoke; for some minutes, they

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gazed upon each other's faces, and without a single syllable of remark they parted.

The ball had taken effect. Just over the rooms of the unfortunate Ford there lived a student of the name of Hart—I may mention his real name, since here there is nothing that can give pain. Hart was engaged in his studies, when he was startled by the loud and near report of the gun, and then by the fall of something heavy on the floor beneath, and the death-scream of the murdered man. He rushed down stairs; the door of the dean's apartment was closed: Hart ran up stairs again, and, bringing his tongs, he wrenched it open. Scarcely had he entered the room, when his throat was convulsively grasped by a muscular arm with a vehemence that made him tremble for his safety.

"Ah! murderer, I have you!" gasped Ford—for it was Ford that had caught him; but his grasp soon relaxed, and he fell into Hart's arms. Hart screamed for help, dragged him towards the light of the fire, and hideous was the spectacle that he then presented. The bullet had entered in directly through the eye;

and the eye itself, shattered and bloody, was hanging down upon the lacerated cheek. Ford had been stooping when he received the shot, and the bullet had torn his cheek first. "Who has done this?" exclaimed Hart.

The dying man recognised the voice of his favourite pupil—for Hart had been his pupil and his friend.

"Hart, are you come to me? My eye is blinded," and he tried to raise his hand to the lacerated organ.

"Who, sir, has done this?" asked Hart.

"The park, the park," faintly articulated the dying man. "Oh, Hart, it was a lovely star. O Heaven, my poor mother!"

Hart fancied it was the ravings of delirium that he heard. The head had fallen from his arms upon the hearthstone, and Hart was endeavouring to raise it again, when Ford appeared suddenly to raise himself: he muttered something, and Hart stooped to catch the words. He kissed the lips that were lowered towards him, and had just strength to throw his arm round the neck of his friend: in a dying struggle he hugged him close in a bloody embrace.

“Vale! vale! longum vale,” he said solemnly and slowly, and he fell back and spoke no more.

By this time some students who had heard Hart’s cries entered the room. The arm of the corpse was round the neck of Hart, and its joints were already stiffening before Hart could be persuaded to permit himself to be parted from the embrace. The dreadful news soon spread; the whole College crowded into Ford’s rooms; many conjectures were hazarded; some imagined that the dean must have been killed by the Papists, in revenge for his attachment to the principles of the constitution—indeed, among the students, this seemed the most general opinion, and threats of vengeance were muttered, deep and loud. The supposed martyrdom of the dean had atoned for all his severity, and his memory became suddenly as popular as his official conduct had been hated. Nothing now was heard but panegyrics upon his goodness from the very lips that that morning would have cursed him for his strictness. Hart was the only person who could be adduced as evidence, and his testimony could throw no light on the

mysterious transaction. An inquest which sat upon the body returned a verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown."

Wallis had been among the number of those who crowded the chamber of death; but he dare not come near the corpse; he fancied that it would bleed; he had heard that the body of the murdered would shed drops of blood in the presence of the murderer. What brought him there at all? He mingled with the throng, to know if indeed there was no hope—if indeed he was a murderer. He ascertained that he was, and self-condemned he slunk away.

* * * *

The murderer had crept to his bed with the stain of blood upon his soul. He had appealed to his philosophy for support against the stings of conscience, but it was in vain. He could prove by reason that he had done nothing wrong; but what was reason against the instincts of the heart? He laid his head upon his pillow; but there was before him a large and a terrible eye: it was no vision of the deep sleep; the eye was wherever he looked—it was fixed on him with a

calm, a steady, but a withering look. "It is the all-seeing eye," thought Wallis; "but no; I know there is no Almighty." He flung himself upon atheism for support; but it would not do; the hollow blast was sighing through the ill-joined crevices of his window, and it seemed to him the voice of fiends, calling for their prey. He jumped from his bed, and thought that this would calm his imagination: he went to the fire, the embers of which were still faintly burning in his grate; he cowered down beside it, and thought that there was some safety even in his neighbourhood to the little spark that glimmered in the embers; and then he heard heavy steps passing close behind him, and stains, as of blood, passed before his eyes, and he dare not stir, and there he sat, cold and shivering, through the greater part of the night.

Towards morning, there was a loud and violent knocking at his door, and he recognised the voice of Browne demanding admittance. He opened the door, and Browne rushed past him; he threw open the window-shutters, and the moon, which had just risen, threw a faint light into the room. Browne caught him by the

wrist, and pulled him to the window ; he looked full in his face, and laughed loudly and terribly : again he looked, and laughed louder than before ; and it was not until some minutes that he seemed to have satisfied his frantic glee.

Wallis knew not whether he was in the grasp of a madman or a fiend. "Ah, fool, I have done my work," cried the being who held him : "did I not do it well ? I am not now like you. I have done my work, and I will have my wages."

"What work ?" Wallis ventured to ask.

"Ah ! the work of my master : the Evil One is my master, and I was to get for him your soul and Palliser's soul, and have I not done it ? Mark me, you are damned. You believed my story about the thousand pounds—ah, ah, ah ! —it was a lie—ah, ah, ah ! HE, HE, Wallis, was a liar from the beginning. You ruined that poor devil, Coleridge ; *you* robbed him, and he *did* put an end to himself : and hear me," he continued, grasping tighter Wallis's wrist, as he struggled to escape, "hear me out ! You remember when the dean called me back, as we were leaving him yesterday ? it was to tell me that he would think on the matter during the

night, and that, if possible, he would not bring us before the board : and you were a gratuitous murderer. Wallis, you are accursed. I have done my business."

He gnashed his teeth, and laughed wildly again. Wallis attempted no reply. "It was for Ellen's sake you did all this—that she might not know your villany ; and you love ! you ! the profligate, the sensualist, the gambler, the murderer"—and again he laughed, and let go the wrist, which he had blackened with his grasp.

He turned, as if to depart, but just as he was reaching the door, he turned round, and sprang upon Wallis with a tiger's spring—"Ah, wretch ! there is one thing yet ; you must howl like me," and he set up one of the most fearful yells that mortal ears had ever listened to. "Ha, ha, ha !" —he laughed at the terror of Wallis. "The damned howl ! I have to teach you to howl like me. It is in the Bible—'In the streets and on the tops of the houses everyone shall howl.'* On the tops of the houses, Wallis." He paused, as if thinking on something : he looked towards

* Isaiah, xv. 3.

the ceiling, and then once more set up his dreadful howl.

Wallis trembled at the words, "the tops of the houses:" there was a significant look in Browne's eyes as he said them which made him tremble lest he might compel him to choose some more perilous place for his howling: he thought it safer, therefore, at once to imitate his fiendish noise. The other seemed satisfied; he even complimented him on the skill with which he modulated his intonations. "You will do well for it," said he. He then, as if a sudden burst of tenderness came over him, said softly, "Heaven help you! you will never see me more."

He rushed from the room, and Wallis heard the same fearful howl dying away across the courts.

* * * *

Next morning, there were strange stories told through the College; all believed that the ghost of poor Ford had been howling through the courts; and one of the porters declared, and offered to verify his statement upon oath, that, as he stood upon his watch, a figure rushed

past him howling, which he could swear positively to be that of the murdered dean. Browne had disappeared, and no one knew where he was gone: no one, however, connected this with the mysterious murder.

I must hurry over the remaining scenes of this strange tragedy. I have dwelt, perhaps, too long on those which have gone before. Wallis had accomplished his end; he had buried his guilt in the same grave that closed upon the remains of his victim, and he stood before his fellow-men with a fair character; but need I say he was not happy? The strange disappearance of Browne had taken a hold upon his imagination that made him miserable, and his waking and his sleeping hours were haunted by hideous phantoms. Unable to endure the misery of remaining in College, he was yet afraid to return to his home, where he would meet with the affection of those who thought him innocent. There is a purity in the pleasures of the domestic hearth—there is a peace, a holiness in the affections of the domestic circle, from which guilt will shrink, as if the guilty felt he had no business to be there. Wallis felt all this; he could

not bear the thought of sitting once more beside his greyheaded father, and receive the blessing of the pious and the simple-minded old man ; when he could not say "amen" to his God bless you—he could not meet the fond gaze of the confiding girl, of whose love he felt himself unworthy. He wrote to his too-indulgent father, and obtained from him permission to visit the Continent : and without returning home, he left Dublin in the vain hope that he could leave behind him thoughts and feelings that he carried in his breast.

Even Palliser felt something of the murderer's remorse, and he adopted the mad expedient of silencing conscience by stupifying thought. Constant intoxication soon brought him to an untimely end ; and scarcely six months from the day when he had been accessory to the murder, his servant woman found him one morning lying smothered in his bed : he had his clothes on, and his hand still grasped the neck of a bottle, the contents of which it had been his last act to drain.

Wallis, meanwhile, wandered through strange lands and new scenes ; he mixed in all the

gaities, ay, and the dissipations of the Continent; but he could not forget the fearful act that had stained his soul with blood. He plunged deeper and deeper into folly and sin, but still the murder haunted him; he went from place to place—he viewed the romantic banks of the Rhine, and wandered through the grand solitudes that surround the shores of Lake Lemman: but no—it would not do. - Sometimes, when, of a moonlight night, he would walk out to view the magnificent and stupendous Alps, he relates that he has seen the mountain upon which he gazed, shape itself, as it were, into the figure of a man, and assume all the form and features of a giant Browne, and glare fearfully on him, with that glance which he never had forgotten. But it would be useless to detail all the strange fancies that are recorded in the manuscript before me. I might, perhaps, be suspected of exaggeration did I attempt, however feebly, to describe the spectres and hideous phantoms which remorse had painted on the imagination of the guilty man.

For two years Wallis continued to evade his father's and his cousin's often-urged entreaties

to return home. At last, he received a letter from the former, telling him that his cousin was so ill that, unless he hastened home, there could be but little chance of his finding her alive. His father detailed the particulars of her illness. Some time before he wrote, she had been found lying in the garden in a state of complete insensibility ; upon recovering from which, she had raved for some days in the most wild and fearful manner. Her reason had now returned ; but her health had received a shock from which she had not rallied. Her strength was sinking every day before some wasting disease, the nature of which baffled all medical skill ; and, at her own earnest request, Wallis was to hurry home, as she wished to see him once more before she died. From the very first, she had made up her mind that her illness would prove fatal.

He obeyed the summons—he hurried home ; and though travelling then was not so rapid as it is now, he arrived in time to see his cousin before they should part for ever. The morning he was expected, she had taken a strange fancy. She had insisted upon being dressed in a bridal

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dress of spotless white—it was in spring—she had decked her hair with roses gathered from a bush which Wallis had planted in the days of their childhood, and which was still called his rose tree—the first roses of May used always to blossom upon it. Round her waist she had fastened a broad black sash, which contrasted strangely with her white dress ; and thus did she await the arrival of him who was to have been her husband. She had more strength this morning than usual—the paleness on her cheek had given place to a deep crimson flush : she walked from room to room without appearing to be fatigued. Her father I had almost said—it would have been but a slight mistake, for he loved her as a father—her uncle fondly fancied that all her illness was but anxiety at being separated from her lover, and that with his return her strength too would come. He smiled at her dress as she leaned upon his arm ; but he objected to the symbol of mourning which was round her delicate waist—he urged her to remove it. “No, uncle,” she answered, “let it stay ; I cannot put it away just now.”

Wallis came at last—he was folded in the

arms of his aged parent—he forgot the guilt of years in the overwhelming tide of feeling that rushed upon his soul. For a moment he fancied himself innocent as when he had been there long ago; and he met the greetings of his own Ellen, as he used to call her, with the pure passionateness of holy love: he was changed—he was himself again—the sympathies of his nature had revived, and he gave vent to them in a flood of tears.

He had not been many minutes at home until he saw that time had wrought its change both in his father and his cousin. The former was more bowed than before, and even the hectic flush of excitement upon Ellen's cheek could not disguise the working of the canker that was eating at her heart. As he held her hand, he felt that cold, clammy moisture which he knew to be the dews of death. He gazed on her beautiful but emaciated form until he thought his heart would break—she never seemed so lovely before. He wondered how he had ever left her side—and then the chaplet of roses—but enough of this—the reader of feeling will con-

ceive his sensations—to others, my words could never convey any idea of them.

After a very short interval, she requested that she might be left alone with Wallis; her uncle left the room. Scarcely were they left together when she threw her head upon his bosom, and sobbed as if her heart would break. “Oh, Wallis,” she cried, “I have seen him!”

“Seen whom, love?” said Wallis.

“Him, him,” she repeated; “the man who made you do it!” and again she sobbed.

Wallis pressed her to his heart. “I am dying,” she resumed; “but I knew I should live to ask you. I forgive you—you have broken my heart; but tell me you are not a—oh, I cannot say it—did you kill him?”

She gasped convulsively—he made no answer—she screamed and sank senseless in his arms. Terrified, he cried for help; she soon, however, recovered; her uncle was by her side; she would not permit herself to be carried to bed.

“It is all over,” she faintly said; “I wish to die in this dress—oh, Heaven, receive my poor soul!”

Her uncle threw himself upon the sofa upon

which she lay. "Child of my heart, do not talk of dying—your own Wallis is come back; oh! you must not die—you will not die before your poor old uncle," and the old man wept like a child.

But it was too evident that she *was* dying—she began to wander in her talk. Wallis held her hand—"Oh, say," she said, "it was not true—I am dying—let me tell in Heaven it was a lie!"

"She is raving!" cried her uncle, and, in an agony of grief, he tore the few grey hairs that years had left upon his head.

Wallis leaned down to kiss her forehead. "Oh! say you did not kill him," she whispered, "say it, and I shall be happy; I know you did not. It was a lie of some fiend that came to me—did you kill any one?"

"Child, do not talk thus!" said her uncle. "Oh, Wallis, speak to her, she is raving; oh, what shall I do?"

The poor girl shuddered,—her glazing eye kindled with a momentary fire as Wallis answered, "No."

"Swear it," said she, and she feebly attempted to clutch his hand, "swear that this hand never

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shed blood ; the blood of a fellow—of Ford”—and she gasped wildly, and her breathing came short and quick.

“ By him who made me,” he answered, in agony, “ I swear it never did !”

The perjury had passed his lips before he thought of what he said. It comforted her. She seemed satisfied ; a smile lit up her pale features ; “ Come to me, my father and my”——she paused—then, turning on Wallis a look of dying tenderness, she added, “ my husband !”

They both came nearer, and hung over her ; she squeezed Wallis’s hand and said, “ You are innocent—I die happy :” she pointed to the chaplet and the dress : “ bury me with these.” She untied the black sash—it fell—a white one was under it.

These were the last words she spoke : her eye was fixed now upon her uncle, then upon Wallis. At last, it rested upon the latter, and remained so until it became immovable in the changeless stare of death.

She had ceased to breathe some minutes before they were conscious of it ; but when indeed

her uncle found that she was gone, he flung himself upon the corpse, he kissed her cold and ashy lips, he kissed her eyelids. "Oh! my Ellen, you are not dead—she will come to life—Wallis, get water—she is only fainting—Ellen, your uncle is calling you—you used to come when he called—Oh, she is dead—I am all alone." He paused, overcome by the violence of his grief; he laid his head beside hers, and he crushed one of the roses of the chaplet; he perceived it, and began arranging it again; "Oh, Ellen, my child, you will not leave me—I have not much longer to stay here, and you will not leave me—who will take care of your poor old uncle?"

"I will, father—your son," cried Wallis, throwing his arms round his parent's neck.

The old man turned, and seemed to recollect that he had a son; he kissed once more the corpse, and permitted Wallis to lead him from the chamber of death; but they both turned round as they went, and gazed upon that corpse, still arrayed in its robe of white—and the long dark hair curled that morning by her own hands, but now fallen in lank locks from beneath the

chaplet on his temples—her features still lovely even in death—and the black sash which her own hands untied, still lying by her side. The old man burst once more into sobs and tears; but why should I attempt to describe his mourning?—who that has ever seen the sorrow of the aged but has felt that there was something terrible in an old man's grief?

The death of his father soon left Wallis heir to the property of his family. He became one of the most respected and virtuous characters in the whole county—he spent all his income in doing good; and, for fourteen years, he lived the idol of all around him; but the sequel of the tale may best be told in the words of a codicil which was appended by the archdeacon to the manuscript from which I have been hitherto taking my materials.

* * * *

“It was in the summer of 1750 that I received from Wallis this strange, and to me startling account—my parsonage was, at least, fifty miles distant from —— Park, and I had too anxious a concern in my poor people to take so long a journey away from them; but towards Christmas, I received so many and so urgent letters

from Wallis, urging and imploring me to assist him, that in the beginning of January, in '51, I ventured to comply with his request. I found him in a most unhappy state of mind, despairing utterly of forgiveness for his crimes, and believing that was an impersonation of the Evil One who had assumed human shape to destroy him. I endeavoured to reason him out of this last fancy, and I partially succeeded; but the oath, the false oath which he had taken to Ellen in her dying moments, preyed grievously upon his mind. 'How,' he exclaimed, 'how could I dare to swear falsely by my Maker when an angel was just about to leave my presence for his?' I endeavoured to lead him to those promises of our holy faith, which hold out pardon to the worst of sinners. I succeeded in calming his mind; but he said he felt that some evil was near him. 'I feel as if I was soon to die, and for the last two or three days I have heard that fearful howl ringing in my ears. He came here once—he must have been, or *she* could never have known it—Heaven forgive him if he is a human being.'

"We were sitting one evening in the drawing-

room in which poor Ellen had died. Wallis chose this room—a large window, which opened on the shrubbery, made it in summer pleasant enough; but in winter it had rather a comfortless appearance. It was dusk—the ground had for some days been covered with snow, and the night seemed closing in for a heavy fall, as the small flakes were beginning to drive in a close thick shower. The shutters were not yet closed, and Wallis and I were conversing on the subject which now occupied his entire thoughts; he was pacing up and down the room, and seemed to speak with more hopes of his own eternal state than he had for some time—a full-length portrait of Ellen hung over the chimney-piece—he came and gazed on it earnestly—he turned to me, and said: ‘Has not my destiny been a strange one?’

“‘You have made it so,’ I replied; ‘beware of throwing upon destiny, or, in other words, on the Almighty, the evil which your own passions have created.’

“He looked at me earnestly—‘But Browne! was he the creature of my own passions? Does not he seem born to cross my path, and

blight my hopes, both in this world and the next ?’

“ ‘It is not for me,’ I answered, ‘to fathom the mysteries of Providence, but your hopes for the next world are not blighted: the Creator will pardon all that come to him.’

“ ‘For fourteen years,’ said he solemnly, ‘I have sought forgiveness’—he paused, as if musing; he then turned, and said quickly, ‘did those words ever strike you—‘with thee there is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared?’ At first I thought them strange—why God’s being a forgiving God should be a reason for his being feared—but they are full of meaning. I feel it. I fear God now, because I believe that there may be forgiveness—if it was not for this hope, I should have nothing more to fear.’

“He walked to the window, and made some observation on the pattering of the snow-flakes against the panes, when my ears were startled by a howl that resembled more the yell of a demon than the voice of anything human. This was followed instantaneously by the report of a gun, and a piercing scream from

Wallis. He fell—I ran towards him—he was dying.

“‘Oh, there he is—he is come for me—he shall not have me—he is howling—save me! save me!’—foam was on his lips—his eyes were turned in his head. The servants, alarmed by the report, had rushed into the room; some came to assist their master, others ran to apprehend the murderer, whose howlings we could hear receding through the shrubberies; but both attempts were equally in vain; the bullet of the assassin had been true to his aim; and the assassin himself had escaped.

“The night closed in cloudy and tempestuous; the snow whirled in large drifts, and was piled up high against the doors and windows of the house. We could find out nothing that would lead to any detection of the murderer; the servants, who were warmly attached to their master, went out to brave the storm, and seek vengeance for his blood; but the drifting of the snow had obliterated the marks of his footsteps, and all the trace they could discover of the matter was this: that a farmer who lived just at the foot of a wild mountain behind the de-

mesne, said, that just as the shower was thickening, he went out to give fodder to his cows, when a man rushed past him, making a strange and most dismal noise, and with something in his hand, whether a stick or a gun, he could not be sure—‘for,’ added the peasant, ‘I was afraid to look ; it was strong upon my mind, that it was nothing good.’

“Several weeks afterwards, when the snow had thawed away, there were found in a ravine, some way up the mountain, the remains of a man, supposed to have perished in the snow, as even then a slight relic of a snow-drift was about him. He was almost naked—a tattered great coat and torn trowsers were his only garments—and beside him lay a gun. It was some of Wallis’s tenants who found the body in a state of advanced decomposition, and so sure were they that this was the body of the man who had murdered their beloved landlord, that they drove a stake through the heart, and piled over the body where it lay, a huge cairn of stones.”

* * * *

The Archdeacon’s narrative ends here. I myself have seen the spot where the body was found, and the cairn ; it is still called “Dead

Man's Glen," and the cairn is regarded with awe by all the peasantry; they tell strange stories of a headless man being seen there, and of strange noises being heard. I confess I was weak enough to put these superstitions to the test. I visited the spot at all hours of the night, and have sat on the grey cairn—its base is now overgrown with moss, and a rank-growing mountain ash overhangs it—but I never was fortunate enough to hear or see anything. It is singular, however, that among the traditions about the place, they frequently tell of strange howlings being heard there. I did, upon one occasion, hear something which I imagined to be this; but I found it proceeded from my own dog, who had followed me, and set himself upon a neighbouring rock to bay the moon.

There can be little doubt, that under that cairn are the bones of Browne—and that he was Wallis's murderer; but who or what he was—what drove him mad—for mad I believe he must have been—or where or how he spent the sixteen years that intervened between the morning that he left Wallis in his rooms,

and the night upon which they both went to their long home, are secrets which, perhaps, must remain so until the time when every deed of darkness shall be brought to light.

CHAPTER V.

THE SIZAR—ARTHUR JOHNS.

*“Haud facile emergunt quorum virtutibus obstat
Res angusta domi.”*

WHEN I come to extract from my memoranda the materials of a third of these chapters, I begin to fear there is but little prospect of my fulfilling my intention of diversifying these pages with the chequered scenes of life, with alternations of sadness and mirth. I have noted down many tales and scenes at which I once have laughed, but somehow I cannot recall the pleasant or the humorous recollections with which they were once connected. It may be a change in my own temperament, or it may be the mere effect of passing years, whose mist in

this long retrospect hangs heavy over that which once was most cheerful to behold. Close to the mountain, as we gaze on its glens and its crags, and its ravines, we see forms of life and joy, the sunbeam on its side, the heath-flower clothes its slopes, the shepherd's cot laughs in its sheltered nook, and the grotesque cliff peers in some fantastic form above it. When we view the same scene from a distance, all is lost in the sombre outline of the dark mountain, all faded into the indistinctness of the dim and distant and melancholy blue. All my recollections of the past are tinged with some mournful association. I in vain attempt to recall the merriment and the joy which once attended many of the scenes of the past.

I take from my note-book another story of a young heart broken in the struggle for distinction, of the lamp of genius fed at the expense of that of life.

I have headed my chapter "The Sizar." That word is an expressive one—let no votary of fashion throw down, with supercilious contempt, the page on which it is recorded that Arthur Johns was a sizar, as if that appendage rendered

his name an unfitting subject for romance. It proves but that he was poor, and that he had intellect; and though these be both damning, equally damning disqualifications for becoming the favourite of the frivolous, and the gay circles of unmeaning fashion, yet surely poverty cannot check the enthusiastic impulse of the human heart, or dry up the springs of human feeling; and it is with these, reader, that Romance has to do—but we shall see. If my friend was poor, there was nothing dishonourable in his poverty—he was not one of the great ones of the earth—he was of humble, very humble origin, but this did not disgrace him; he never was ashamed of it when living, and now that his ashes are cold in that grave, where the poor man and the rich man repose alike, I surely do not dishonour his memory in recording it.

He was gifted with rare and great endowments that singularly burst from all the difficulties that were cast around him by the humbleness of his birth. Of his early days—I mean those which preceded his entrance into the University, for, alas! he never lived to

number any but his early days—I knew but little; nothing, indeed, but what I learned from himself. Born of poor but respectable parents, he was intended for a mechanical trade. For nearly two years he actually worked at that humble occupation which yet the Saviour of the world did not disdain to engage in. The association is recalled to my mind by a remark which I often heard poor Arthur make. He told me that he used to feel, when standing beside his carpenter's bench, that it was an honour to him to be permitted to follow that occupation which his Redeemer had followed in the days when he was obedient to his father. He said that he often cherished the hope that he had something within him fitted for far different pursuits; "but when," he used to say, "my proud spirit wandered to ambitious speculations that made me sometimes despise my calling, I thought of WHO was the carpenter of Nazareth, and I used to put away from me vain thoughts."

That he did not, however, wholly repress all hopes of raising himself from the station of a mechanic, is evident from the fact, that in the

evenings, after he returned home from his day's work, he taught himself the rudiments of Latin. Without help or encouragement from any one, he for some time prosecuted his studies with the most industrious diligence—in those hours which, after his day's confinement, were almost necessary for amusement. He said himself, that the only motive of which he was conscious, was a thirst for information; but as my narrative progresses, my reader will, perhaps, agree with me, that a vague and undefined hope mingled with this feeling, and urged him, perhaps unconsciously, to exertion, of which an object that he then scarcely acknowledged to himself was the aim.

Fortunately — I use the word mechanically—it might have been better otherwise; I might rather say unfortunately he soon met with friends who did everything that benevolence and prudence could suggest to second his exertions and direct his efforts. The clergyman of his parish was one to whom his parishioners looked up as to a father, and one who looked upon all his parishioners as his family. The living was one of those usually called College livings, in the gift

of the College, and generally conferred upon a fellow. It had supplied a retirement to an excellent and learned man, who had long been an ornament to his college. Dr. Wail was not likely to overlook ability so remarkable as that of young Johns—he having accidentally become acquainted with his proficiency in Latin, sent for him to the parsonage, and examined him as to what progress he had made. Being struck equally by his talents and his demeanour, he took a deep interest in the lad; he lent him books, and directed and assisted his studies, and when he considered him fit for the University, the generous man defrayed the expenses of his entrance.

At the University he did not disappoint the expectations which his benefactor had formed. At the largest entrance which had occurred for some time, he bore away first place, and returned home the pride of his parents and the wonder of the village. The most flattering anticipations were formed of his future greatness—his father and mother thought that no one like him ever had been heard of, and all the neighbours used to wonder how the carpenter's lad, whom

they had seen working so steady and so quiet, could have "beaten all the gentlemen's sons in the college at the learning."

Arthur's high spirit could not bear to be under pecuniary obligations, even to the pastor, whom he revered; and at his own most urgent request, an arrangement was entered into, by which he was to repay the money that Dr. Wail had given him on going to Dublin, by giving daily instructions to the younger children at the parsonage. Dr. Wail, however, insisted on such terms, that three months' tuition not only repaid what he had advanced, but left him a few guineas to bear the expenses of his journey to Dublin, at the first examination.

At this examination he was again eminently successful. He obtained the classical premium, with the most flattering encomiums from his examiner, and returned again to his humble home as unassuming as ever, to prosecute his studies after this fresh encouragement, with renewed ardour.

It was at this period that I first became acquainted with him. I had met one of Dr. Wail's sons in college, and having had an op-

portunity of shewing him some trifling civility, I received a most kind and pressing invitation to the parsonage. I availed myself of it at a time when many things had inclined to put me out of temper with the world and myself; and when I thought, and thought rightly, that I would not be the worse of the calm of spirit which, with me, is always a certain consequence of being an inmate of a good man's house.

From the first moment that I saw Arthur Johns, I felt an indescribable and indefinable interest in him. I had not been long at the parsonage until I heard his name, and so much of his history, as I have detailed. The circumstances under which our first meeting took place, were calculated to make an impression at least upon my mind. I had been taking an evening stroll with young Wail. Passing through the fields, we overtook a plain-looking young man, decently attired in rather a worn suit of black, occupied in disengaging a cow from the stake to which she had been "tethered," or tied. Wail pointed him out to me, and told me that this was young Johns. "Every evening," said he, "he comes here to drive

home his father's cow : he is not spoiled by his college honours ; he is just as humble and unassuming as ever."

We entered into conversation with him, and even in the few minutes that he talked with us, I could not help being struck by the simplicity and quaintness of his manner, and yet the justness and strength of his remarks. His dress, I have already said, was plain ; he wore his hair combed down over his forehead, after the manner of the Methodists, in which connection his father had occasionally officiated as a class leader, or local preacher, a circumstance from which Arthur's character derived much of that stern piety of deportment which was its chief grace. The occupation in which we found him, so characteristic of that humility which prevented him from being raised by his distinctions above ministering to his parents' comparatively lowly condition, spoke more to my mind for his amiability of disposition than all the praises which I had heard lavished on him at the parsonage.

The more I knew of him, the more I felt that he was no common spirit, and I looked

forward with confidence to the time when he would prove this to the world. There is something deeply interesting in watching the progress of genius, of which the world knows not. We experience more than a sympathy in the struggles of the spirit which, we feel assured, is yet one day destined to sway the minds of men—we find a personal interest in the progress of those powers in which we feel, if I may so speak, that, like the first discoverers of unknown land, we have acquired a property, because their existence is known to few but ourselves. We have a pride in being the first to appreciate the intellect to which the world will one day bend, and we look forward with proud anticipations to its future triumphs, as if, in some sense, they were to be our own.

My intimacy with him soon increased into friendship. He made me the depositary of his difficulties and anxieties, and sought from me that advice which my greater age and superior knowledge of the world enabled me sometimes to give him with effect. But I must not dwell too long upon all the little incidents, which might, perhaps, be very uninteresting to my

readers, however my fond affection may magnify them into importance. I remained two months at the parsonage, enjoying the society of good Dr. Wail and his amiable family, and every day improving my acquaintance with Arthur Johns. I left them in the end of April, and I was accompanied to Dublin by my young, but, even then, my dear friend, who came to pass his second examination at the University.

At this examination he was not successful.

Arthur bore his disappointment with the equanimity that I expected. It was immediately after this that I advised him to become a candidate for the place of sizar. Few of my readers, perhaps, are unaware that the Dublin University, with that spirit of liberality which so favourably distinguishes her collegiate institutions, has allocated thirty sizarships to the support of poor students, who are unable to avail themselves, in any other way, of the advantages of an academic education. The places are filled up as vacancies occur, after an examination, at which all persons are privileged to present themselves, and the successful candidates receive their education gratis, and are entitled, for four

years, to chambers and commons in the University.

When first I urged him to present himself as a candidate at the examination, which always takes place on Trinity Tuesday, he made many objections. He was apprehensive of failure—he did not think his classical attainments sufficient to meet the competition with which the places are always sought (I have known upwards of one hundred candidates for six vacancies); and it was with no little difficulty I overcame his reluctance to encounter the examination. I was not, however, disappointed in my estimate of his success; although without any special preparation for a most severe and scrutinizing examination, he obtained first sizarship, with marks that placed him far beyond the reach of competition.

Having given this decided proof of his ability and classical attainments, and being strongly recommended by Dr. Wail, he had not much difficulty in procuring a situation as assistant in one of the first schools in Dublin, with a salary that to him was affluence; and having his cham-

bers and commons in college, he now seemed comfortably settled.

The free rooms appropriated to the accommodation of sizars are the garrets in the old brick or library square, and in one of these Arthur Johns was soon comfortably lodged. Each set of rooms is generally appropriated to two; but the Provost, as a compliment to his acquirements, allotted him a set to himself. This is generally considered as a favour. Poor Arthur seemed greatly gratified by the compliment it implied. The first evening that I sat with him in his small and solitary chambers, he told me of it with pride. I did not wish to damp his spirits, but I could not help involuntarily sighing, as I thought the favour was to be condemned to the solitude of a lonely garret. Those who know the miseries of a "chum" will understand that it was a real favour; but just then I thought that there was no great compliment in being left, without a companion, to the miserable and unfriended loneliness of a college-life. There was something that was, alas! too prophetic in the melancholy feelings with which I regarded it.

Between the duties of his situation and his studies Arthur's whole time was occupied—occupied, indeed, far more than I could have wished. I could not but observe with alarm, as the summer advanced, that the constitutional paleness of his cheek had assumed a still more ashy wanness, and that his once bright eye was beginning to be heavy and glazed. I urged him to take more care of his health, and to read less; but he used to laugh at me. He said the walk to and from the school was sufficient exercise for him. When I urged on him the danger of too much mental exertion, he used to point to his head and say, "God never gave us our brains to be unemployed, and he never will let us be injured by employing them."

And it seemed as if his confidence was well grounded. Naturally delicate, he appeared uninjured by an application that might have worn down the most Herculean frame. Winter passed away, and at every examination he attained honours and raised his character. Everyone now spoke of him: he became the subject of almost universal interest. The chief portion of his time was devoted to the study of the classics;

and yet it astonished me, who knew how much he neglected his scientific reading, that he bore a high, a very high character, as a scientific scholar. By the most strict economy of his time, he had also contrived to amass a fund of general information that was quite surprising; and it may give some idea both of his ability and his industry, that while, for five hours in the day, he was harassed by the wearying and dispiriting labours of a school, he yet managed, in the hours that were his own, not only to prosecute his academic studies with a success that might well have been the result of undivided application, but to acquire a knowledge of those subjects of general literature which the majority of academic students too generally neglect.

And, as if to make the difficulties of his situation more apparent by contrast—as if to bring into more striking relief the truth of the maxim, which is as old as the days of Juvenal—as old, perhaps, as the selfishness and the heartlessness of society—that poverty is a drag upon genius, a weight that crushes many a noble spirit to the earth—his principal opponent for honours was a young man of fortune, and one whose parents

wisely thought that their wealth was well applied in providing for their son every facility of distinction. From one examination to another, St. George was provided with the best tutors that the University could afford, and the hours of his study were broken only by recreations that might invigorate his mind. Poor Arthur was thrown upon his own resources; and the best, because the earliest, hours of his day were taken up in toiling not so much to find a livelihood for himself as to minister to the comforts of his parents; and yet, with all these odds against him, the child of poverty and toil was successful against his favoured competitor.

Time passed on, and another summer vacation arrived, with its long and dreary days—long and dreary to those who have ever passed them in the solitude of the city, or still more in the desertion of college. In the months of July and August the streets of Dublin were almost deserted. The rumbling of the wheels of a solitary carriage rolling along may occasionally be heard afar off in the quietness of the streets; and the cart of the waterman, as he goes about to lay the dust, tells you that, at least, the mu-

nicipal authorities calculate upon the presence of some passengers in the streets, for whose convenience they are concerned; but go into College, and you have the utter picture of desolation. You find at the gate, perhaps, a solitary porter, listlessly keeping his sinecure watch; but you meet in the archway no troops of gowned gibs hurrying to and fro, as they flock to or from their lecture; no pompous premium men, looking with an air of self-importance at the notices on the gates. You hear no hum of voices in the courts. You may look round and round, and see no trace of any living thing. Nothing meets your eye but the glare of the hot summer sun, falling on the white burning pavement, and flung back with increased intensity upon the pillars and walls of the gray buildings. All is lonely and deserted; and you feel almost afraid that you are guilty of a crime as the echo of your own footsteps starts the silence and disturbs the repose of the cloisterlike stillness that is around you. And yet there are men who make this lonely place their residence for the summer months—some by compulsion, and some by choice.

In the beginning of July Arthur paid a short visit to his parents. I would have given much to have seen this meeting. But I can conceive the pride with which they must have received him to their humble roof. I can fancy that I see his old father blessing God for having given him such a son ; and his plain mother, with her matronlike cap and clean white apron, gazing on him with pride for the past and anticipation for the future, as he sat by their lonely fireside. His visit, however, was a short one. He returned to Dublin sooner even than he had intended. I confess I thought this strange—that he should thus, as it were, tear himself from the shelter of a parental roof ; and when I found that he had returned, after an absence of a fortnight, I feared that he was getting too proud for his parents' cottage. I was at first angry with him ; but I began to think that perhaps the feeling was only what might be expected from proud and foolish human nature ; and I sighed for the imperfections of mankind, that alloy even the best and noblest dispositions with the base mixture of mean selfishness and silly pride. My reflections were, perhaps, philoso-

phical. I might not have formed too low an estimate of human nature, but I did my friend deep injustice.

After his return I never saw such intense devotion to study as he manifested. His whole soul appeared concentrated in the desire of distinguishing himself. I knew not how to reconcile his sacrifice of health, of everything, to this one object. He did not seem ambitious. He was a mystery to me. It might have corrected my unjust suspicions of his want of filial duty that he had proved his affection for his parents far more substantially than by paying them long visits. Ever since he left them he had received monthly his stipend from the school where he was engaged; and each month he transmitted the best part of it to his mother, reserving only so much as was necessary for those wants with the supply of which the strictest economy could not dispense.

During the long days of summer—days in which, as I have already said, College is almost altogether deserted—I often made it my business to interrupt his studies, and force him into an hour's recreation. Often, of an evening, did I

bring him reluctantly from his books, to wander under the shelter of the fine old trees in the college park,* and talk with me of many and of strange things. He loved the moonlight on a summer night; and often did we carry with us two chairs from his apartment, and sit under these old trees, watching the moonbeams silvering their leaves, and an occasional bat wheeling round their branches, and then winging his dreary flight to some crevice in the walls of the library. On one of these occasions a circumstance took place which I never can forget. I had been speaking to him of his future prospects. I had been reasoning with him on the indiscretion of the course he was pursuing, in devoting his entire time to classical studies, to the neglect of scientific pursuits. I suggested to him that for classical knowledge the University made no permanent provision; while, by applying his time to the study of science, he might

* It is usual to close the park gates at night-roll hour; but, at the time of which I speak, the gates leading into the park were, during the summer vacation, permitted to remain open until twelve. I do not know whether the same custom is still observed.

ultimately obtain a fellowship, —a result which his abilities, and, above all, his habits of intense application, might warrant him confidently to expect. He told me candidly that he did not wish for a fellowship. I spoke of its emoluments: he only answered by a deep and heavy sigh. I pressed him on the subject. . “Of what use,” said he, indignantly, “is the wealth that fellowship confers on you, when a regulation, which is the remnant of monastic barbarity, prevents you from sharing it?” A deep red blush, I thought, of indignation, passed over his countenance. I could not help laughing. Of all the persons I knew, I thought him the least likely to be deterred from a fellowship by the celibacy regulation; and I told him so, and rallied him on the point. He seemed ill at ease: he rose from the chair on which he was sitting, and stamped his foot hurriedly on the ground. I rose too, and we both, almost mechanically, walked away from the spot.

Nothing more passed between us; but I felt convinced, by the extreme agitation of his manner, that it was a particular attachment, and not a mere general liking for the matrimonial state,

that created his aversion to the restraints of the celibacy statute.

I did not wish to question him upon the subject connected with our conversation in the park ; and yet it often occurred to me that he was endeavouring to lead the conversation, so that I should ask for a disclosure that he wished to make, but did not choose to volunteer. I determined to seek an opportunity of obtaining his confidence on the only point on which I had reason to believe that it was withheld. Accident soon obtained it for me.

I was invited, about the middle of September, to make one of a party to visit the lakes of Killarney. I sought and obtained permission to invite Arthur to accompany us. To my surprise, he positively refused. I pressed him ; but, what with him was very unusual, he was obstinate, without being able to give a reason ; and I was at last reluctantly obliged to forego my useless solicitations.

The evening before we were to set out I spent with him in College. The evenings had shortened to their autumn length, and there was no moonlight ; so we could not now go and

take our usual walk in the park ; it was, too, a drizzling evening, the light, misty rain, or fog, was coming in at the open window in the attic beside which we sat—for in summer the garret rooms, from their vicinity to the slates, become intolerably hot ; in winter they are, for the same reason, proportionally cold. It was such an evening as might put anyone in bad spirits. Arthur was very much depressed ; but I attributed it to the state of the atmosphere. Twilight was closing in fast. As we sat conversing, a pause occurred in our conversation : Arthur rose and walked across the room in violent agitation. “ Mr. O’Brien,” said he, “ you are going away to-morrow. We may never meet again ; and there is only one secret I have never told you. I do not wish to take it to my grave.”

I was astonished at the sad and bitter tone in which he uttered the words, but he did not give me time to interrupt him. “ Mr. O’Brien,” said he, more loudly, “ do not laugh at me ; do not think me a fool ; I am one—I am IN LOVE.”

The earnestness with which the words burst, as it were, from the contending emotions that

were choking in his throat, told me that even if love might ever excite a smile, his was not a passion at which I could laugh.

"For years," said he, "long years, a hopeless passion has been preying upon my soul; it has roused me into energy that belonged not to me. You have told me that I have abilities. I have shown them, but oh! they were but like the maniac's strength, the unnatural excitement of the same powers that belong to other men. Love was the frenzy of my mind, and that frenzy gave me new and unnatural strength, and like the maniac, *that strength has worn me out.*"

These were the very words he used, and even if they are incorrect, I will not alter them.

"When I was but a child," continued he, "a passion seized upon my mind, and the idol of it has never since for a moment left her shrine. I have dreamed of her when asleep—I have thought of her when awake. I have wandered over the hills, and heard her voice in the music of every breeze, and seen her image mirrored in the bosom of every lake. Thirteen years ago—thirteen years ago"—and he paused upon the words—"she was a child—a sweet, innocent

child, and I was a boy, and not much older than herself. I gathered her wild flowers when she was out with her maids walking through the fields, and I loved her then, and I have loved her ever since."

He had not yet mentioned the name of the object of this wild and enthusiastic passion ; the story was singular indeed : I need not attempt to detail it in his own burning words, but the substance of it was this :

Matilda —— (I cannot give her true name, and there is a sacredness around her in my mind which prevents me from attaching a fictitious one)—Matilda was the daughter of a gentleman who lived at no great distance from Arthur's home. When they were both children, he had conceived for her the most romantic passion, which, unlike most boyish loves, had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength. He met her in her walks through the fields when the tenderness of both their ages prevented the distance which the difference of rank created between their more mature years. As they grew up he met her but occasionally, but still the passion lived in his

heart. He used to go wherever he thought that he could catch a glimpse of her, even at a distance; and what was most singular was, that though he had cherished this passion for fifteen years, until the object of his childish affection had become a woman, and he himself a man, yet never had he once given the slightest indication of his presence; it was shut up in the loneliest recesses of his own heart, and in that shrine he was content to worship, in secret, the treasured image of the unconscious object of his admiration.

There was something so singularly, so wildly, almost so unreally romantic in the history of this passion—thus formed in childhood, cherished for thirteen long years in secret, and now for the first time communicated to any human being—that it invested his character in my mind with a grandeur that it had never possessed before. The constancy with which he had clung to his early idol, even where he had no possible expectation that his love was requited, could only spring from feeling not like that of the ordinary sons of men. His was the worship of a poet, which could thus abstract, as it were, its object

from all the circumstances that surrounded her, and bow down before her in secret in all the purity of spiritual affection. Here, too, was the clue to much that had been hitherto mysterious in his character. His almost superhuman exertions to attain distinctions that he did not seem to prize at all, was to raise himself to a station in which he might honourably seek her love. And while I could not but admire the depth of that love which prompted him to these exertions, I could also the better appreciate the fulness of that filial devotion, which, instead of hoarding the immediate proceeds of those exertions, appropriated them to ministering to her parents' comforts.

He walked up and down the room for some time—he seemed ashamed of what he had told me. At last he flung himself upon a chair, the only one beside the one which I occupied which his scantily furnished apartment contained—he leaned his head upon the table, and burst into a convulsive flood of tears.

It was but for a moment—he became calm, “Mr. O’Brien,” he said, “I am foolish; but had you like me loved—No! love is not the

word to express what I felt, what I feel—it was madness. For fifteen years she has been the vision of my soul—a part of my existence—mysteriously present to all my thoughts—but now,” said he, “the spell is broken. Surely ‘man disquieteth himself in vain.’”

I endeavoured to urge upon him the *possibility* that he might yet attain his wishes, but he stopped me. “You do not know the nature of my passion. Long, long before I calculated on the cold contingencies of life, this passion seized my mind. I remember the day when I gathered her wild flowers; she then seemed to me like an angel: and from that hour I associated with her everything that was fair, and virtuous, and pure. I was then in an humble station, and in it I would have been happy, but it was not God’s will. She crossed my path like a being from another sphere; a spark, as it were of fire, fell upon my soul, and it has been burning ever since: and this was the flame whose flickering gleams men have admired; for I know I have been admired. But do you recollect Horace?”

‘Post ignem ætheria domo
Subductum Macies et nova Febrium
Terris incubuit cohors ;’

and so it was with me. I stole the fire from heaven ; a fever preyed upon my heart and consumed me, and the production of this disease was what you called genius.

“She is now a woman,” he said, after a pause ; “but I cannot bear to think of her otherwise than as the simple and innocent little girl of former days, with her eyes blue as the heaven on which she smiled, and her curls clustering round her face : but I have seen her, different, changed, like other women—a flirt !”

A deep groan burst from his heart. With difficulty I persuaded him to tell me to what he alluded. It seemed that, during his last visit home, an officer quartered in the neighbourhood had been paying Miss —— some particular attention—she was not very averse to receiving it. Her familiarities, which never passed beyond the bounds of propriety, in the eyes of a jealous lover were crimes. She knew nothing, she could not dream of his attachment ; but still he fancied it a crime that she should re-

ceive even the common-place attentions of another ; and unable to endure the sight of what his madness—for madness it was—regarded as a desecration of the goddess of his idolatry, he had hurried from his home ; and this was the secret of that abrupt departure which I had attributed to such a different cause : but how could I have dreamed of the real one ?

But with absence his love returned. He reasoned with himself that he had no cause to have a lower opinion of Miss —— than he had before ; but still, the spell was broken ; she had hitherto been an ideal creature of his fancy ; upon whom, as it were, no one could look but himself : she was now but a woman, and, strange to say, for the first time, he began to think of the possibility that some more favoured rival might bear away the prize for which he had toiled so long. It was strangely characteristic of the wildness of his passion, that never before had this very rational apprehension crossed his mind.

His love, he confessed, was as strong as ever, but he said it was undefinably changed in its character ; it had assumed more of reality, and

less of that mysterious indefiniteness which had been, perhaps, its charm. It seemed, he said, as if its object had been suddenly removed from that holy and enchanted bower, in which the magic of his imagination had securely enshrined her, and was now in the world of sense, exposed to all the dangers, and subject to all the caprices of ordinary women.

He now mourned over the hopelessness of his passion. I endeavoured to inspire him with hope. "Ah!" he answered me, "in what reasonable time can I hope to attain a station in which I might hope for her hand? Years must pass away, years to me of solitude and anguish; and will she wait for a lover of whom she has never heard, and whom, if she did hear of, she would despise?—ah!

'bene nummatum decorat Suadela Venusque.'

Some rich and heartless fool will purchase her with his wealth to misery." He smote his forehead with his clenched fist, and muttered "PURCHASE HER," two or three times bitterly.

This was a conversation that there was little use in pursuing. He was the victim of a pas-

sion, the strangest that ever preyed upon the heart of man ; and what to say I knew not. I urged him strongly to change his mind, and accompany our party to Killarney on the next day, but he was inexorable. He said, when I was about to leave him, that he had a presentiment we might never meet again. This was very strange, for he generally spoke in a tone that I considered almost presumptuous, of the certainty of his reaching a good old age. I remarked to him the change. "I will tell you why," said he. "You remember the first commandment with promise—'Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long.' I thought I had surely honoured mine, and that my days would be long."

"And why not depend upon the same promise now?"

"Because I am not sure that I have always honoured them, Mr. O'Brien," continued he : "it went to my old mother's heart to part with me the last time. She did everything but command me to stay, and I might have gratified her : and I pleased myself, and she cried sore when I left her."

“Well, Arthur,” said I, “if this be the only thing in which you have not done honour to your parents, I trust God will forgive it, and grant you length of days.”

“Amen,” he responded, in a tone of mingled confidence and fear.

We parted ; and as I heard the heavy slam of his garret door, as I hurried down the stairs, its sound fell upon my ear with a strangely dismal and melancholy foreboding. It was now quite dark : I wrapped my cloak tight about me, and sallied out across the courts. I looked back, and saw the glimmering of the candle from Arthur’s attic window cast a faint and solitary ray upon the darkness that wrapped the rest of the buildings.

Next morning rose gay and joyous upon the world, and I turned my back upon the town to enjoy a fortnight’s ramble among the far-famed beauties of Killarney. At the end of that time I returned to town, and but a few hours had elapsed before I sought out Arthur Johns.

I found his room shut up, and from his opposite neighbour, who had returned to College in my absence, I learned a story that even now

I can hardly bear to tell. Poor Arthur had been seized with a brain fever. He had been some days ill before anybody knew it, and one day he was found in the agonies of delirium by one of the few students who were then inmates of the College, wandering about the courts, his head streaming with blood, and his face and linen disfigured with its stains. He was taken by this student upon a jaunting-car to Sir Patrick Dunn's hospital, where he still remained.

To the hospital I rushed, almost distracted with grief and alarm. I found one of the surgeons, who told me that poor Arthur's death was hourly expected. He said that it seemed a case in which proper treatment at first might have subdued the complaint. "But," added he, "when he came here, mismanagement had put it beyond our reach." I was admitted to his bedside. He lay in one of the wards of the hospital, in a clean, but lowly bed. He did not know me; his eyes were rolling heavily in a deadly stupor, and his lips moved occasionally as if attempting to mutter something; but they gave utterance to nothing but the most indis-

tinct sounds. For about four hours I sat beside him, determined to see the last of him. It was just as the twilight was fading away in the darkness that his pulse ceased for ever to beat ; and one long, gasping sob exhaled his last breath.

I could hardly believe that he was gone—that this was the end of him of whom so many fond and proud hopes had been entertained. I am not soft-hearted ; I have seen death in many a shape, and I am stern enough to gaze on it unmoved ; but when I looked upon him in that bed, a lifeless and a mangled corpse, and thought of all he was, and of all he might have been, and of what the surgeon had told me, that care at first might have saved him, I thought my heart would have broken.

I say, his mangled corpse—for—how shall I tell the most horrid part of this dismal tragedy ! He had, it seems, sent for an apothecary on finding himself unwell. The wretch whom he sent for ordered him a blister for his head, and paid him no more attention ; thinking, I suppose, from the appearance of his garret, that he was not likely to make much by attending him.

He sent the blister, and his college woman, his only attendant, applied it to his unshaved head and left him. The pain tormented him, and in a fit of delirium he tore away the blister and parts of the scalp together, and with the blood trickling over his face he wandered out into the courts. My readers know the rest.

These dreadful particulars I learned from the nurse-tender. She told me that in the fits of his delirium he had often called on me, and that sometimes he would fancy himself talking to a beautiful young lady, and then again he would think he was contending with a she-devil. And this was the end of one who might have been an honour to society and to his country!

Round his neck I found a key carefully fastened. I took it off, and having obtained admission to his rooms, I proceeded to secure the little effects he had. Every thing was just as he had left it. His dictionary was still open where he had been searching for the meaning of a word; his bible, too, never had been closed since last he read it. But, gracious God! I felt my heart faint, and a deadly sickness come over me as I discovered but too positive proof of the horrid

truth of the nurse-tender's tale. But I will not shock my readers by describing that, the recollection of which, even now, makes the blood curdle at my heart.

The key which I had taken from his neck I found to open a little cabinet that stood on a table near his bed. Inside it I found a piece of mechanism which I still have in my possession—a little coffin, most beautifully formed, of mahogany, and lined with scarlet cloth. On opening it I found a heart of the same material, broken into two, and branded on it with fire, the word "Matilda."

A few months after this, I was again on a visit at Dr. Wail's. Poor old Mr. and Mrs. Johns—they seemed many, many years older than when I had seen them last. I could not have believed how quickly sorrow does the work of time.

I had many opportunities of meeting with Miss ——, and the more closely I watched her the more mysterious did Arthur's passion appear. There was nothing extraordinary about her; she seemed to me a pretty, unaffected, and innocent-hearted girl; she spoke of Arthur as a person whom she hardly knew, but expressed

great commiseration for his bereaved parents. Alas ! she knew not , and if it could mar an hour of light-hearted happiness, I trust that she may never know the heart that burned—that broke for her. It is not probable that she ever will ; it is more than probable, if she does, that it will cost her but a passing pang. She has since married, and with her husband gone out to India.

THE END.

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